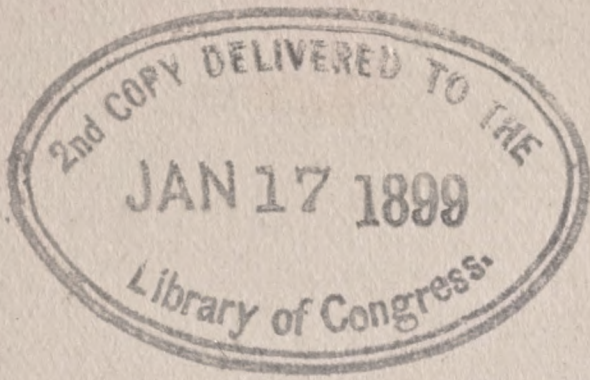


A
CIRCLE
IN THE SAND

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A Circle in the Sand

A Circle in the Sand

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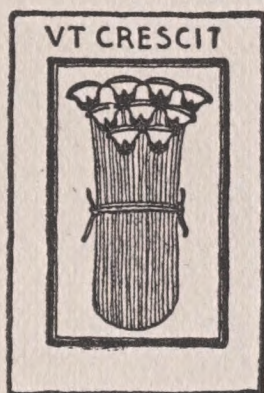
Kate Jordan

[Mrs. F. M. Vermilye]

Author of *The Kiss of Gold, The Other House, etc.*

Poised for an instant in the master's hand,
Body and soul like to a compass stand —
The body turning round the central soul,
He makes a little circle in the sand.

Le Gallienne's rendering of the Rubidyât.



Lamson, Wolffe and Company

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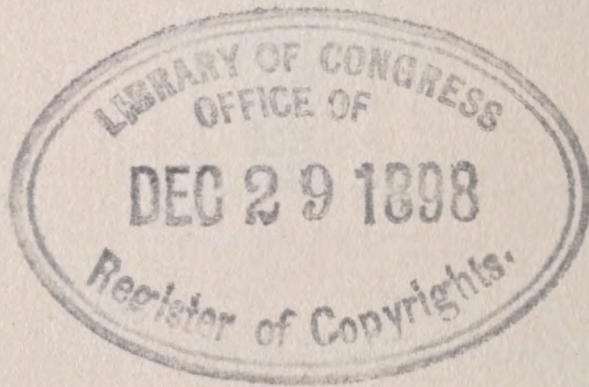
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To
F. M. V.

A Circle in the Sand

Chapter I

THE office boy stood beside David Temple's desk, a slip of paper on which a name was written in his hand. He knew better than to interrupt the editor when his pen was racing in that aggressive way, so he stood rumpling the bit of pink paper with grimy fingers while speculatively regarding a fly running unmeaning races from a cloudy map of the United States to the big ink bottle occupying the centre of a very untidy desk.

The day was breathless and humid. From the earliest hours the sun's rays had swept the streets like destroying glances from a malevolent eye. The

dusty, ink-spattered offices of the New York "Citizen" were stifling. Beyond the open windows could be seen sun-baked roofs, spires, and chimneys swathed in a hot mist. Every man in the editorial rooms was in his shirt-sleeves. Some had discarded moist collars. All were working hard.

David Temple laid down his pen and glanced over the hastily written page, his expression determined.

"That'll make them hum," he said, and without looking up he touched the bell, at the same instant becoming aware of the boy beside him.

"Here you are. Take this down, Pete, just as fast as you can. Eh? Some one to see me? All right. Tell him to wait. Come back at once."

He picked up the paper, the kind in use in the office, bearing the directions: "Name ——. State business." "Anne Garrick" was written in lead pencil upon it. The latter request was unheeded.

David laid it down, lit a cigar, and

went over to the window. It was a still, maddening day; the horses toiled between their shafts; the springs of life moved wearily even on Park row. He looked at his watch. It was half-past four. At six he was due at The Players to dine with an actor, who, by means of a haunting voice and a pair of fine eyes, enjoyed an income that equalled the Vice-President's. He had promised to go to a dance on board a yacht anchored in the Sound. He began to wish he could escape the latter and instead find his way to the hammock on his roof-top, where he could smoke under the stars. At thirty-six, with hair whitening, he was getting past dances.

"The young lady" — commenced Pete timidly at his elbow.

"Oh, there is a lady! I'd forgotten. Show her in," and he slipped on the alpaca coat lying across the chair.

The swinging door was pushed back, and Anne Garrick came toward him. She seemed, in the first inattentive

glance, tall, slenderly made, her face showing marks of care or illness, yet pretty enough to be interesting. Her eyes were long, very bright, yet soft, and they were a deep brown like her hair. Her gown was of mourning cloth and she wore a black sailor hat.

David drew a chair forward for her and, seating himself opposite, let his great shoulders rest easily, while he regarded her, as was his fashion, through half-veiled eyes.

“Miss Garrick?” he said, glancing at the slip. “What can I do for you? You’ll pardon me if I tell you at once that I have a dinner engagement at six and have only a few moments to spare.”

This was said with one of David’s confidential smiles.

“I sha’n’t keep you long,” she said, leaning forward, “Dr. Ericsson, my uncle, sent me to you.”

“Oh, yes. How is he? I’ve not seen him for a month.”

“He’s very well, thank you.”

“So you come on business from him?”

and David breathed freely. "Do you know, Miss Garrick, I was afraid you were here as an applicant for work on the paper?"

"So I am," she said, her eyes amused. "Is it quite useless?"

"You mean you really want newspaper work?" and his tone was almost reproachful.

"I really do. I want it more than anything else in the world. Indeed, I want nothing else," she said earnestly.

"You have some illusions about it, perhaps?"

"I don't think so, and I must work."

The words were spoken lightly, but with an urgent note. David was interested. His fingers fell from the fob he had been twisting in regard for the passing moments. He noticed the line of impatience between her straight brows, the intensity in the bend of her mouth, the paleness of her worn yet youthful face, her intent attitude.

He had met many women demanding just such martial struggles in the

battle of existence. Here was another. What should he say to her — the old objections, the old warnings? He was disinclined for the task more for some reason now than ever before. But the “Citizen” did not want women among its workers. That was one of his father’s prejudices which he had never set aside.

He returned to the argument, but his tone was still persuasive. This surprised himself, yet he felt it was because Miss Garrick came from Dr. Ericsson, and his liking for the old Swedish physician was a very deep one. He would not admit to himself that there was another reason — the youth, the charm, of this woman making the plea he had rejected so often.

“The work is terribly hard, Miss Garrick, and really,” he said, as if making an admission almost against his will, “I don’t regard the newspaper as a field for women.”

“Don’t you? Why not?”

“Oh, it’s a blistering atmosphere,

and women were never meant to find nourishment in hard facts. I advise you to do something else — write a book, or teach, or anything.”

“Oh, Mr. Temple,” she said with sudden earnestness, “I don’t feel that way about it! I want to be a journalist.”

David felt a desire to know her a little better — to hear her views and then dismiss them successfully. He had still fifteen minutes to spare. He began to think she was very pretty.

“Have you ever been on a paper?”

“No, although I’ve written a great deal,” she said, while watching him intently. “I thought I might get something to do regularly — some position. I know I’d succeed. I wish you’d try me.”

“No — I can’t,” he said, almost brusquely, “and I hope you’ll change your mind and try something else. Besides, I haven’t anything I could offer you, nothing a woman could do — much too difficult. You take my advice and try something else.”

“I think I know what you mean” — and she stood up. “You think this work hardly feminine” —

He nodded. She looked disappointed, but unconvinced.

“And you’re afraid of encouraging incompetence.”

“Oh, no, really, I” —

“Yes, I think you are. Well, I’ll tell you just the way I feel about it. I must be a journalist” —

“Why must you?”

“Because I know I’m fitted for it, and the life attracts me. I might have preferred to be a painter or a musician, but we are not allowed to select our talents.” She smiled and moved a step away. “If you can’t employ me there’s nothing more to be said about it, and I’m sorry for having detained you. But — somebody else will employ me. I’ve only been in New York a month, and you’re the first editor I’ve seen. This will explain why Dr. Ericsson suggested my coming to you. I showed it to him.”

She drew a letter from her pocket and handed it to David. He was surprised to see the heading of the "Citizen" on the sheet, his own handwriting beneath it. It was written to a man named Robert Heron, and directed to a small Rhode Island town.

"You know Heron?" he asked quickly.

"Yes. You like his work, it seems."

"Very much," he said, in a mystified voice. "I don't as a rule seek 'specials' outside, but his were so trenchant, so brilliantly phrased, so exactly what we wanted, I couldn't help, you see, writing to ask the cause of his long silence. Most of his work, of whatever sort, has commanded attention here. Now, there's a man," said David enthusiastically and in the final tone which closes an argument, "I sometimes wish had the ambition and spirit of the woman of to-day. He's wasting his time in a small place doing desultory work; a dreamer, I dare say an idler too. We need men like

him here. I wish you'd tell him so," he smiled.

Anne's eyes were perversely girlish as she said simply:

"I'm Robert Heron, Mr. Temple."

Chapter II

THE advent of a woman in the editorial rooms of the "Citizen" was no longer the latest topic there. Anne had been one of the staff for a fortnight.

She had come with a reputation already made, which she must continue to sustain. Every nerve had been strained to do this, and she had succeeded. All other impressions had been lost sight of in this one purpose. The rush and pressure of life around her, the strange scenes and faces, the new routine, seemed the fabric of a dream-world where she was the intensely vital figure.

Although her working hours were short, the continued effort and oppressive heat had given her face a wan touch. But she felt no fatigue. On the con-

trary she was aware of the satisfaction arising from fulfilment. This niche in the dusty, metallic world where a great newspaper was made was the only thing she had craved. To prove herself worthy of its possession was the single aim of her life. David Temple had hesitated to engage her because she was a woman. He had told her she would soon weary. She must prove his prophecy false. This was the impetus that made her bold. The result was gratifying.

Matters of social and moral importance started out vividly during the terrible summer weather. The handling of some of these was assigned to Anne. It would seem that David Temple had decided to take her cruelly at her word and treat her as a man, or as if he had wished to force an evidence of affright or weakness from her. He was mistaken. Anne was a soldier's daughter. Best of all, she was confident of her right to be there. Robert Heron had never done better work than came from her pen during that fortnight.

When she had defended her position and won, there came a lull, and without seeming to watch she absorbed a knowledge of the people around her and noticed what events and colorings go to make up existence in a newspaper office.

There was the sentimental reporter, who furtively read and re-read feminine-looking letters and sighed over stock reports; the silent man with the scarred face, who smoked strong cigars; the society editor, whose smile was as well oiled as his russet boots; the baby-faced reporter, who betted on everything and "matched" on the smallest provocation; the fretful critic with the perpetual cold in the head, who banged the door as if to insinuate his exit was final, and who always returned in a rush for something forgotten; the artist lounging with an exalted look to his feet, who drew inspiration from Egyptian cigarettes; Pete, the office boy, with terrible worldly knowledge in his pale eyes and the *savoir faire* of a veteran clubman in his manner, who grew confidential with

her and tried to interest her in the intricacies of baseball; and David Temple, the editor-in-chief, who, unlike many of his compeers, worked hard, bringing with him an assurance of well-bred ease and a capability for exertion and endurance.

Her surroundings were so strange that Anne often wondered if it were indeed she who was there, the lonely girl who in the well-stocked library of a silent country house had written most of the historical and descriptive "specials" which had commanded attention.

While the clatter of the presses and the unaccustomed tread of life were in her ears she would close her eyes and summon a vision of a different scene and time: A hollow at the foot of a hill where a great pool lay, and willow branches like green lengths of dishevelled hair trailed in the water; a girl — herself, the Anne Garrick who was dead never to rise again — lying at full length under the trees, her cheek upon an open book, the fragrance of a lost land around

her, the whir of unseen wings, the fire-flies in the blackness under the cedars or flashing like uneasy eyes from the confusion of lush grass, the sound of water pushing its way through twisted weeds with a coquettish whimper like silk rubbed on silk.

Some snatch of a street song, the exciting news of the last murder, or the clangor of Trinity's bell would frighten these imaginings, and despite her pagan love of nature she would return to work, happy that the last two years of solitude and reverie were over.

David talked to her very little and never about anything save work. She watched him and found him curiously interesting. Other men were more or less of a familiar type, but David Temple was individual. A nascent force marked his lightest action. To be near him was like coming within the radius of a powerful electric current.

She had always liked clean-shaved men. They seemed a degree farther

from the idea of the ancestral monkey than their bewhiskered brothers. David was clean-shaved, spare of flesh, strongly built. There was unity in his simple name, stern face, searching gray eyes, and the practical surroundings in which he worked. Back of his desk the bound volumes of the "Citizen" for a generation were sombrely heaped. Electric wires and buildings of granite were visible beyond the window near which he sat. The man and his mission were melodic.

Anne was slowly drawing on her gloves one evening when the reporter with the scarred face laid down his cigar and asked a question of nobody in particular.

"Any of you fellows know where Donald Sefain has hidden himself this time?"

The name attracted her, and she found herself waiting for the reply.

"Oh, Lord, it's too warm to think of Sefain's vagaries! He's probably trying tenement-house life again with some of

his slum friends while a penny remains. When he's broke he'll come back and work for another spurt," the society editor replied with fine unconcern.

"Fool! Flinging himself away! He won't last long."

"D' you know what I'd do if I were in Temple's place and had such a precious bundle of shiftlessness and surliness for a so-called brother" —

"H'm! There isn't much doubt about what you'd do."

"Kick him out." And the society editor fingered his imperial tenderly.

"I think he hates Temple more every day," said Jack Braidley, the reporter who "matched." "He's an idea he's one too many in the world, I fancy."

The words were hardly spoken when the door opened and a man came in. From the hush greeting his entrance Anne knew it was Donald Sefain. She looked at him attentively.

There were unmistakable marks of vagabondism about him — his dusty

clothes, churlish manner, long, untidy hair. He was of moderate height and slender build, he carried his shoulders poorly, and his eyes were sunken. But for all this his dark, foreign face, sneering, secretive, defiant, was startlingly handsome as he stood in the red wash tones of the sunset pouring through the dusty windows.

He looked at Anne with some surprise in his glance, his expression questioning; then he became indifferent, nodded curtly to the men, and sat down at a corner desk. From his attitude one would have supposed he was sketching or writing. As she passed him to the door she saw his fingers were motionless, his open eyes introspective.

While the room contained a dozen men, it was evident Donald Sefain would be left alone with his musings. He had withdrawn from the others as if from habit. Even before she had passed into the hall they seemed to have forgotten his existence.

Chapter III

THREE miles lay between the offices of the "Citizen" and the trio of rooms Anne had rented and furnished during the six weeks of her residence in New York. They were in a low red-brick house separated from the street by a patch of grass and iron palings. The neighborhood had Washington square for its nucleus, the only part of the money-making town preserving the mossy tone of Knickerbocker days, where occasional low doorsteps and spindle-legged banisters keep the costumes and manners of the century's infancy clear in the memory.

Anne loved the queer street, the venerable church opposite, with its unfashionable parishioners and sweet-tongued bell, the amethyst light stealing across

the landscape of roofs, the fret of trains flashing past in aërial passage not far off and leaving a plume of vapor behind, the passing of many people along the pavements reaching into smoky perspective.

These impressions were a ripening contact, helping to wake her to newer perceptions of life, making her realize that she stood unsupported in a crowded, struggling place.

She had the exhilarating sensations of a daring and capable swimmer who plunges into deep water where only his own skill can keep him afloat.

Her eyes were shining, her color high, as she hurried up the narrow stairway and entered the sitting-room. An old man was standing by one of the windows and turned expectantly as she came in. It was Dr. Ericsson. He looked at her with cool, friendly scrutiny.

“I’ve been waiting for you again. There’s something witching about you, Anne,” he said helplessly. “You’ve

quite spoiled me for solitude. Every dinner I have away from you is like sawdust."

Anne laid her arm lightly around his shoulder. She was a little the taller. There was something charmingly audacious in her young face and protecting attitude contrasted with his gray hair and sixty odd years. She had the impetuosity and assurance of a fresh runner who fears nothing on the long, mysterious race just begun. He had the half-defeated expression of one approaching with lagging steps the end, and who thinks little even of the winning of that race which nevertheless must be run in one fashion or another.

"I never knew a man so eager for compliments," she said, her lips curling in playful scorn. "Shall I fib, and say every meal is lonely without you? Not a bit of it! I come home so hungry, uncle dear, and the man at the corner sends in such good chops! I put on a blouse and dream over my coffee, while Nora in the kitchen sings Irish melo-

dies in an adorable voice and with a creamlike brogue."

She laid her finger under his chin and looked into his eyes.

"But when you do come, you dear, cynical creature, I shelve dreams gladly and don't care a pin for Nora's songs. Satisfied?"

She hurried away to change her gown, and Dr. Ericsson was left alone in the dusk. He listened in a dreamy way to the maid crossing and recrossing the rug-covered floor. His arms hung by his sides, his eyes were fastened on a trail of smoke diminishing in the sunset.

Thirty years before, then a young Swede newly arrived in America for a bout with fortune, he had married the sister of Anne's mother. They had settled in New York, and by degrees he became successful and rich. His wife was a beauty, his children's future bright, and life went well. But trouble came. His children, with the exception of Olga, the youngest, died during

school days; his fortune, entrusted to false friends, went to help their speculations and was lost. Now, in old age, he was a physician of reputation, but poor, possessing a fashionably inclined wife, whose weekly letters from Paris, where she had elected to live when Olga's school days in Switzerland were over, were wearying longings for the vanished wealth. His daughter was almost a stranger to him. She had gone away a child: she was now a woman of twenty; what sort of a woman, evolved by her mother's worldliness and a false system of education, he hesitated to consider. His life was spent in the depleted family mansion on Waverly place, with one old servant, amid furniture masked in gray holland and portraits of his lost children blinking through gauze sheetings. Only his patients and friends had prevented him from becoming like the piano in the corner, which had almost forgotten how to vibrate.

But he knew what a home might be

since Anne came to New York. He was very fond of her, wholly in sympathy with her. His gaze wandered to a shadowy pastel on the wall before him, where her deep eyes were touched by the sunset's fire. It seemed to tell him much. Hers had been a stern, starved girlhood up to the present year. After college days and between the ages of twenty and twenty-three she had been chained to the bedside of an invalid father, her life a strain when it was not stagnation, unused energy fretting her heart, what should have been the sunniest period of her life drifting by in shadow.

When her father died, she had found herself wholly orphaned and free to plan her future according to her tastes. She had a small income, a thorough education, and the talent of being able to write with splendor and force of whatever she felt deeply. The controlled yearnings for freedom had grown into one desire, and she had gratified it. The old home was rented, and like a

young David entering the camp of the Philistines she had come to New York. Three things she had determined on — to live alone, work, fill her days with impressions of life, fling away books and study men and women.

When the maid appeared with candles Anne followed her, a bowl of roses in her hands. The newspaper woman in severe, collared gown was gone, and in her place was an exquisite creature akin to the flowers and the starry lights. Her shoulders and arms gleamed through a gauzy black bodice. A modish knot showed the fine abundance of her hair. One rose was fastened at her bosom, where it flamed in splendid warmth.

Dr. Ericsson looked at her critically. She was more than pretty: she was imperfectly lovely, or, rather, beautiful without fulfilling conventional canons. During quiet moments her face was serene and alluring: the dark hair upon the pale brow like banded velvet, the liquid brown eyes poetically thought-

ful, the mouth appealing. Softness, strength, and color were all there. But in action and expression lay her strongest charm. When the lips smiled, when the eyes lightened, and the small, delicate hands as restless as a French-woman's emphasized her words, Anne was irresistible.

"I am going to give you a summer dinner," she said, her fingers lingering among the roses.

"Nothing but roses?"

"You'd be near Nirvana if that could satisfy you. Nora, bring the soup," she added, in a purposely practical tone, as she seated herself.

They were like children together. Anne listened attentively as she led the old man on to philosophize of life as he saw it. She told him of her newspaper work, its newness, its delight; of the novel she had commenced, and how sometimes she rose at dead of night to make a note of an idea or a phrase; of all her faiths, dreams, and prejudices. To him she was piteously youthful. To

her he was old, wise, and weary. He had settled all with destiny. She was buckling on her armor. It seemed that the heart he had lost throbbed in her bosom; he longed that the impossible might be made possible and she might keep it forever so — valiant, free, happy.

“I suppose you know David Temple very well by this time?” he asked.

“You’d be surprised if you knew how seldom he has spoken to me,” she said, resting familiarly on her elbow. “He sometimes seems a marvellously constructed machine instead of a man. He works so hard. He seems able to attend to twenty things at once.”

“Yes; to lead is in his blood.”

“That’s it,” she nodded. “If he’d been born in a forest in tribal days they’d have made him chief. Or can’t you fancy him a pirate, or a stupendous criminal with a horde of cringing followers, or a cardinal with an eye to pierce a conscience and subjugate a king, or a general like Napoleon, gazing indifferently over the fields of the

dead? Do you know," she said, in an awed, childish way, "I like him?"

"All women like him," snapped Dr. Ericsson.

"Do they?"

"It's a feminine instinct which nothing can kill, to like the man who dominates you—and who can do without you."

"Well, go on," she said, leaning closer.

"Women and their affairs," said Dr. Ericsson, lighting a cigar, "engage David Temple's thoughts very little. He is not intolerant, he is simply indifferent, although most masculine in the gentleness coming from a consciousness of his own strength. It seems to me as if a woman could never fill his many-sided life. There are men born with the love of women in their being, and it grows with their growth. To possess it too strenuously weakens a character and often perverts what should be a reverence into a taste. To possess it with a separateness from the other in-

terests of life suggests the lack of some vital, spiritual fibre. I've felt this with David. If he ever marries it will be because his intellect suggests it as wise, or because his physical nature is enslaved. The two will scarcely blend."

"Yes, he suggests all you say. By the way, tell me about Donald Sefain — his stepbrother."

"Oh, have you seen him?"

"This afternoon. His face haunted me all the way home."

"I see you have Vaudel's 'Desert Monk' on your shelf. You've read it? The pictures are Donald Sefain's. Fine, aren't they? I half believe he made them just to show what he could do, and then from 'cussedness' flung down his pen. He's done no serious work since."

"Do tell me about him," and Anne, leaving the table, wheeled a low arm-chair to Dr. Ericsson's knee.

"It's a bit of a story. Can you reach me a match? Thank you, my

dear. This is very cosey." He sat back and half closed his eyes. "When David Temple was about fifteen his father, as hard and stern a man as ever lived, married a Frenchwoman, a widow with a boy of six. Some people know and a great many suspect there never was a Mr. Sefain, and the boy Donald was as surely John Temple's son as David, for whom he'd have cut out his eyes, he loved him so. Well, Mrs. Sefain was a beautiful woman, an adventuress with the manners of a duchess. I never saw her in a brocade dress without thinking how well she'd look on one of those little pompadour fans, all covered with roses and things. Donald is the picture of her. I think his eyes and smile — the latter too rare, God help him ! — would glorify a plain face into beauty. After five years of the most absolutely perfect marital misery Donald's mother died, and he was left in old John Temple's care. It was a hard fate."

“Why? He didn’t like him?”

“Like him? He hated him as only an intolerant, conscientious man can hate. Donald was a constant reproach to him and a reminder of his married unhappiness. He never let David be friends with him, never. You see, Donald hadn’t a fair chance. He was a lonely little soul.”

“Why didn’t he set his teeth and make something of himself?” said Anne, with the defiance of a champion.

“Ah, that’s what he should have done, exactly! But he didn’t. Instead, at twenty, after leaving John Temple’s house, he went from bad to worse. His face to-day bears scars of the odds against him. He’s a failure. I tried to get near him, but he wouldn’t let me be his friend. It is one of his perversities to affect the poor and mingle with the unfortunate. Anything prosperous inspires a morbid dislike in him; all that’s deformed, shunned, all that lies in shadow, finds favor in his sight. He’s a strange and silent creature, drinking feverishly,

cultivating his worst instincts, finding an unreasonable satisfaction in offering himself as a sacrifice to the discontent instilled into him through the circumstances of his life."

"I don't understand why he's on the 'Citizen' with David Temple."

"Oh, he simply does work for that as well as a few other papers! He's brimful of talent. David employs him as he would a stranger, and pays him for what work he turns in. He's seldom in the office."

The clock struck nine, and Dr. Ericsson started up.

"Good heavens! And a sick man not a mile off is waiting for me!"

He got into his coat, kissed her, and hurried away.

She carried the bowl of roses from the table to the mantel and stood for a moment with her hands upon them, a look of disquietude in her eyes. She was thinking of Donald Sefain.

Chapter IV

A FRESH, bright afternoon, a vagrant from spring coming between stretches of torrid heat.

The stone hall leading from the editorial rooms to the stairs was deserted as David Temple stepped from his office. He could hear voices and laughter through half-opened doors, the din from the streets and shrieking from factory whistles sounding at that height like the deepening howl of a mob. When he turned the corner he saw Anne Garrick, her hand upon the brass scrollwork around the elevator. She looked tired and very young.

A protest leaped into David's heart. He had sometimes experienced the same feeling for a city child contentedly threading beads in the gutter — a wish to transplant it to something more happy,

to a meadow where breeze, sunlight, and leafage were a symphony. At the thought a grim smile twitched his lips. Miss Garrick was weary of peace and loved the treadmill work in the noisy world. She had told him so.

“Have you rung?” he asked, reaching her side.

“Yes, but there’s some delay below,” said Anne, peering down.

“I’ll emphasize the fact that the editor and one of the best writers on the ‘Citizen’ are waiting.” A flash of humor came into his eyes, and he kept his finger upon the bell until its vibrations awoke echoes in the shaft. It was no use, and David looked distressed.

“We’ll have to take to the stairs. Give me your parasol and let’s make the best of it. You can rest by the way.”

They went side by side down the seemingly never-ending iron stairway.

“Are you tired?” he asked when the second landing had been reached. “Wait a minute.”

David took off his hat and stood facing her. They were in deep shadow, the sounds of life above, below, skimming around without touching their isolation.

“Miss Garrick, I’ve wanted to say something to you for several days,” he said, smiling. “I want to take back what I said about women being unfit for newspaper work. You have done splendidly and against great odds.”

“Oh, do you think so?” And the color came into Anne’s cheeks. “I did find the work hard, and it’s been so hot.” Her glance became a little challenging. “And do you think a woman may still be feminine, even if she is not an exotic?”

“Oh, I like the exotic woman!” said David as they went on. “I like a woman sublimely useless, providing she’s a lot of other things. You have proved your right to the career you’ve chosen, but you’re one of a paralyzing minority. Why don’t you acknowledge it?”

His tone was intentionally provoking, and Anne laughed, her glance a negative.

As they stepped from the shadow into the light of the lower hall the glare through the archway of the door dazzled them.

“It’s a lovely day,” said David. “The atmosphere is amazingly clear.” They paused for a moment on the doorstep and looked at the picture of the city. “Every detail,” he added, “shows with the accuracy of a photograph — the blue in the shirts of those laborers, the brown of the trench, the violet-green of that bit of grass, the flags in the blue air. Are you going to walk?” he asked abruptly.

“Yes; there’s such a good breeze.”

“If you’ve no objection, I’ll walk with you.”

A pulse of exultation quickened in Anne’s heart as they went up the swarming street, David adapting his steps to hers.

“Tell me,” he said curiously, “what

Dr. Ericsson thinks of your independent spirit."

"He takes it entirely for granted."

"I am behind the times, I suppose," he said, with a short laugh. "Well, I can't help it. I don't like the independent woman. Oh, she has virtues! But when woman loses her inconsistency and self-doubt she loses her charm."

"She needn't. If she's in earnest and loves it, why shouldn't she work and live alone as I do" —

"But you live with your uncle, don't you?"

"No. I am much more comfortable as I am. I came here sure of a small income. I earn that sum twice over now, I live alone, and I'm writing a book."

"Really!"

They continued in silence, and then David looked at her squarely.

"I am thinking what an amazing gulf lies between you and your great-grandmother. Wouldn't she scold you

if she could come back? Wouldn't she, though?"

"I dare say," said Anne placidly; "but I wouldn't approve of my great-grandmother, nor of my grandmother either."

David threw back his head as a boy does before a shout of laughter, corrected himself, and looked at her with weighty seriousness.

"Really, impertinence couldn't go farther."

Anne's smile was both naïve and speculative as she continued:

"My grandmothers had no spirit, no originality, went in for artistic fainting and wrote silly love-rhymes. They were as savorless as oatmeal without salt, those admirable, chimney-corner women. Their husbands thought nothing of crying 'Tush' at them, and they 'tushed' beautifully. Oh, they wouldn't be at all popular to-day."

"But you are not a 'new' woman?" said David, with some awe.

"No," and the denial was uncompro-

mising. "I hate the 'new' woman. You have not classified me correctly. I hope I am the awakened woman."

"I never heard of her before."

"Well, I'll tell you something about her. Without retaining the womanliness of the clinging heroine of the past, and without feeling to a sensible extent a desire for progress, she could not exist. She is the result of extremes past and present."

"Many of her?"

"She's everywhere. Her privileges are so many she's busy enjoying them. There's little said about her, but every one who thinks knows she is the woman of to-day."

Her earnestness made her face strangely lovely, and the thought prompted David's next words.

"Does she like to be pretty?"

"She delights in it. She's not merely a good chum with men, nor is she a plaything nor an intellectual machine; she's a woman," she said, and there was music in the word. "She believes that

marrying the man she loves — and she can't love the weak, the stupid, the hopelessly corrupt — is the culmination of the purpose for which she was created. She's not ignorant of the existence of evil, but it has not tempted or hardened her. But, best of all, she's not a paragon. Her aspirations are high and good, her faults alluring. Now you know my ideal."

By the time her home was reached they were very well acquainted. Anne felt herself come very near the gentlest side of David's nature as she gave him her hand. He clasped it earnestly as he looked into her untroubled eyes.

"New York is dead in summer time," he said irrelevantly. "All one's friends away! So few people one cares to talk to, anyway!"

An unreasoning sense of gladness filled Anne. She knew he was waiting for her to speak.

"Dr. Ericsson spends many of his evenings here. When you feel inclined, come in too."

“I will,” he said gratefully.

And he did. Often after busy days during which scarcely a word was exchanged between them he would find himself strolling through the sultry night to the grateful coolness of Anne’s rooms. Dr. Ericsson was generally there, but sometimes they were alone.

The unusualness of unhampered comradeship with a bright, young, and pretty woman, their long, satisfying talks on subjects whimsically varied, the independence of Anne’s solitude, her courageous position as a worker, level with his own as a man, appealed to David with a charm new in his experience.

As he grew more and more interested his visits increased. They became good friends. Sometimes while the moon looked over the roof-tops and the candles flamed in the night breeze Anne sang to him. Sometimes Dr. Ericsson and she dined with him, mostly in cool, suburban places, re-

quiring long drives along the almost empty avenues and through the massed shadows of the park. Sometimes on David's roof-top, made comfortable with rugs and hammocks, they three saw the day die and the stars gather like eyes to watch the clashing ways of life. Every day his fondness for her deepened. She was his comrade and friend. He felt himself her silent champion and protector.

Chapter V

“DO you think Temple will get here to-night before the paper’s out?” And the news editor nervously rolled and unrolled the copy he held.

“When he says he’ll do a thing, he does it,” said Frawley, the managing editor, who was covering the pages before him with blue lines from his flashing pencil until they looked like maps of a railroad that followed an inconsequent course and met in a labyrinth.

Anne looked at the clock. It was after ten. The pencil dropped from her fingers and she pulled the shade from above her tired eyes. Since seven she had been writing in a race against time, and now, her work completed, she was tingling with fatigue.

It was the first of November. The summer, unlike any other of her life,

seemed far away. Made up of dusty, feverish days and happy nights, it was past, like a sleep. Through the window before her she could see the fog dripping over the city, a curtain of sootiness, its folds breaking on the angles of houses, the lights of the town white splashes on the haze. The world looked sullen, as if choked under that sooty pall into submission and silence. And yet none knew better than she, sitting aloft among the chroniclers, of the snarl among the unhappy, of the turmoil and crime seething there, and the ambition which spared no brother for the uprising of self.

It had been a day of extraordinary climaxes. A murder in high places had horrified the city. The political struggle was hurrying to a crisis. The latest telegrams told of disastrous floods in one State, and a strike of many thousand miners in another.

As a result there were to-night more striking of bells and the dragging sound

of hurrying feet than were usual even during the exciting hours just previous to the paper going to press. There was expectancy on the absorbed faces. Unrest hung in the air like a storm-cloud.

After a week's absence David Temple was momentarily expected. He had wired to suspend any arrangements regarding the assignment of reporters to the scene of the strikes until his arrival. While the usual routine of making the paper went on the men were waiting for him.

Anne was waiting for him too. A trembling anticipation swept over her as she fancied him coming through the open door. He would bring restfulness into the confusion, a visible power to the handling of the several problems, and it would be good to see him again.

"He ought to be here now," said Jack Braidley, strolling over to her desk. "I hope he'll let me out of Platt's Peak. I don't want that assign-

ment. Starving miners are not much in my line."

"I thought not," said Anne dryly, gathering together the copy headed "The Sunday Page," which during the present stress she edited. "I never saw you look as happy as the day you were sent out to inspect and describe the Duke of Stockbury's wedding clothes when he came over to marry the sugar refiner's daughter. They were in your line."

"Oh, I say, you do chaff a fellow horribly! But seriously, I'm playing for the dramatic critic's place. Jove! Fancy calling that work — every pretty actress smiling at you pleadingly! I was made for it. By the way, Miss Garrick, why don't you go on the stage? Beastly work this, for a pretty girl!"

Anne was not listening to him. Leaning her elbow on the back of the chair, her hand curved like a cup to support her chin, she was looking at Donald Sefain, who had just come in.

There he was, shabby, silent, a recluse

among the alert crowd. The discontent in his worn eyes, his hopeless but unconquered air, seemed now as always like a sad, passionate phrase woven unfittingly into the flourishes of a hackneyed tune.

She wondered if she would ever know him, ever learn just what sinuosities of character, what experiences, had made him the creature he was. This wish had begun to tinge her days. Nothing, however, seemed more unlikely. They had not exchanged a word. He held aloof from her as from every one else.

"Look at that beast Sefain," muttered Braidley.

"Why do you call him that?" And Anne turned sharply upon him.

"Look at his clothes."

"They're not like the Duke of Stockbury's, are they?"

"Besides, he drinks. I saw him drunk once in this very room. It was last spring, I think. His eyes were frightful that day. I expected to have a good

story about his suicide next morning. But fellows like him never kill themselves."

Anne moved away and stood near Frawley's desk, just as Donald went up to him.

"I want to do the pictures for the Platt's Peak strike," she heard him say, in his surly, indifferent tone.

"Mr. Temple attends to that," said Frawley, strolling over to watch the telegrams coming in like mad.

"But I can't wait to see him unless he comes within five minutes. I wish you'd tell him I'd like to go to Platt's Peak. I don't suppose there'll be a rush for the place, anyway."

"Damned fussy about his minutes, for a beggar," thought Frawley, but answered in a colorless voice, "All right."

Donald slouched over to his desk and picked up his hat. He had neared the door when Frawley, peering over the operator's shoulder at the wire, uttered a cry.

“Good God !”

Consternation and suspense fell upon the place. It was as if a full heart had suddenly ceased beating. In the stillness the shrill warnings of fog whistles from the bay were eerie, as if witches shrieked at the windows. Donald paused at the door. Anne stood like a stone.

“Hear this. Temple” — And Frawley sank back into a seat, unable to obey his impulse to speak.

“What, for heaven’s sake?” And one of the men waiting seized the tape from the operator’s fingers.

“Southern express wrecked south of Philadelphia. Many dead. David Temple fatally injured.”

There was much more. Details followed, speculation, exclamations of dismay and pity; but Anne heard only those last four words. They had descended like a sword, striking strength and motion from her body and all but one thought from her mind. She stood with pale lips, a shadow weighing upon

her eyes. She shivered as if in the clammy dusk of death. There was a blur, a grotesque mixing of faces and objects, a sense as of being seized by a horrible, separating current and torn away from all things to which she could cling, a sense of crushing loss.

She sat down before her desk, facing the black window where the city lights flickered. The horror faded into a passionate cry which, though unuttered, shook her whole being. David among the injured! David far away, not strong and controlling, but lying in voiceless pain under the sullen sky! They said, "Injured fatally." Perhaps it meant dying, perhaps it meant dead. Dead! The word seemed to take her by the throat, hold her, look into her eyes, deep into her heart, and laugh at what it saw there.

Nothing in the past mattered beside the rich truth that David had been her friend, nothing in the future beside the craving to touch him and hear him speak her name once more. She knew

in a revealing blaze the secret of her heart that before she had not even dimly understood.

Unconsciously she prayed as she sat there staring into the vacuity of the window.

“Save him! I love him, I love him, I love him!”

Chapter VI

DEAR MISS GARRICK: Your breezy letter came like a voice from the outside world into the solitude of my sick-room. I am much better. In a week or two I'll be myself again. The consequences of the accident are a treacherously dizzy brain, a bandaged shoulder and head, and a great weariness of everything under the sun. Your request stupefies me. I never heard of such reckless courage. Fancy you out among the miners in these times of bloodshed! Do you know what it means? I can imagine what you will say. You are a student of life, and a reading of selected passages will not content you. However, we won't tear this subject to shreds again.

Of course you know that from a mercantile standpoint your report of the strike, your description of the life of the women in that hopeless place, would be most valuable to the paper, and, if you still wish to go, please, for friendship's sake, ask Dr. Ericsson to go with you. I will write to him too. About the stories. Don't go into the intricacies of the strike. Tell the women's story in a

woman's way. I'll feature them in the half weekly and Sunday editions. Sefain, whom you have seen in the office, is there now. I'll instruct him to illustrate your stories, and, as he does excellent work too, they ought to make a hit. The relief fund which has been started will be forwarded to you for distribution. After all these instructions I urgently add — don't go.

Faithfully,

DAVID TEMPLE.

This letter was held closely in Anne's hand, hidden under the folds of her travelling cloak, as the train carried her over the hills of Pennsylvania. Dr. Ericsson had closed his eyes upon the gloominess of his surroundings and fallen asleep upon the opposite seat. She was free to think uninterruptedly, her eyes upon the long lines of windows curtained with mist and irisated with raindrops, the reaches of land patched with melting snow, the smoke from infrequent cottages struggling in the dampness and vanishing groundward as if affrighted.

Ten commonplace days and nights

had passed since sudden grief like a flame had illumined her heart and set before her eyes its hopeless, passionate burden.

Since then she had been unquiet, the happiness of knowing David's injury would not be serious mixed with a curious disinclination to see him again, and a sense of defeat. It appeared irritating that this love should have unexpectedly awakened within her when she had thought herself proud and strong. It seemed as if her senses had lightly succumbed to the potency of environment, as if passion were a mere impulse, and the man treading the same path with her a man to love, not the man her soul had irresistibly sought and found.

And yet something within her, after all reasoning, insisted on being heard. It had an ecstatic voice and gave its own golden meaning to the dark day. She seemed drawn to David by a warm, strong hand, and the delight of yielding sent a feeling of sublime

weakness over her as comes to one wearied who slips the will and sinks to sleep. It was a happy fancy and hid the meagre land under the hurrying twilight from her sight.

Dr. Ericsson gave his body a chilly shake and roused himself, opening one eye querulously and then the other.

“You’ll regret taking me as a traveling companion, my dear. How long have I been asleep?”

“For hours. We’ll get to Platt’s Peak in time for dinner.”

Anne cleared away a spot on the glass with her finger and gazed at the blankness beyond. “You’ll be hungry, poor dear, won’t you?”

“Dinner? Be thankful if we get doughnuts, and cabbage or pork, and fried bread. I know these places,” he grunted. “You don’t know what you’ve run into, young lady. I warned you. I might have saved my breath.”

“Fancy being able from actual experience to describe the pangs of hunger,” said Anne, with a laugh.

“Don’t madden me. I’ve arrived at the age when I respect a good dinner as much as anything on earth. As the irreproachable bourgeois said at the pantomime when the ballet appeared, ‘I wish I hadn’t come.’”

“You’re in a vile humor to-day,” said Anne placidly. “I’m not.”

“Of course you’re not; you’re a woman. You’ve had your way and you’ve made some one miserable, so there you are,” he jerked out, a smile in his eyes. “But truly,” he added, in a different tone, “I had a letter from your aunt this morning which annoyed me very much. They’ll be back sometime in January.”

“But you’ll surely be glad to see them?”

“Oh, fundamentally of course! But there’s the house to be renovated — not good enough as it is. And I am made distinctly aware that Olga is to be brought here on a husband-hunting skirmish. Foreigners evidently have been given up as hopeless. My beau-

tiful daughter has no money, you see."

He clasped his hands and looked belligerent.

"Do you remember Olga at all? I took her down to your father's a few times when she was a little thing."

"I remember her very distinctly," and Anne laughed. "She scratched my face once. We quarrelled all the time. I remember that a little guinea-hen of mine died, and I buried it with proper religious pomp, singing over it 'Sister, thou wast mild and lovely.' But Olga wouldn't have this at all and interrupted the services with shrieks and dances. We parted the frankest of enemies. It will be curious to see her again. Do you know she wasn't at all pretty then?"

"To-day she is a professional beauty with no other ambition than to make a good match. It will be strange to have them back. But you won't desert me then, Anne?" And he looked wistful.

"I have Mrs. Micawber's staying qualities, you'll see," she said gayly.

It was dark now. Beyond the windows lay a tempestuous blackness crossed at times by the red and green of railroad lights.

Anne sat back and closed her eyes. There was work before her, and she meant to do it well. Besides the stubborn law she had always followed of putting the best of herself into her work, there was now a determination to become a name in the world of journalism, and all for a reason that made her a little ashamed, — the milliner who hummed a ballad while she twisted a ribbon for a hat, the dairymaid who eyed her rows of glistening pans with a critical eye while listening for a footstep, shared this ambition with her, — simply the longing to appear well in one man's eyes and be loved by him.

The rain was beating in a drumming downpour on the roof of the car when the brakeman swung in, a red lantern in his hand. As he stood in the doorway, the spray driving against his crouched shoulders, the bloody blotch

of light against his rain-soaked clothes, he seemed a figure of doom, as if the misery, cold and death rampant there had taken human form and entered, crying in hoarse accents:

“Platt’s Peak Colliery!”

Anne’s dreaming fell from her like a cloak shrugged from uneasy shoulders and she sprang up, her face bright with sudden energy.

On Dr. Ericsson’s arm she plunged through the black night to the railway station. . This was little more than a shed over a flooring and supported by begrimed posts. It was dark save for the yellow rays from a small window opening into a box-like house where two telegraph operators sat, the beat of the machines stealing out to the shadow like the clucking of a tongue.

A man stood looking in. When he swung around, Anne found herself face to face with Donald Sefain. They had seen each other constantly without recognition and without exchanging a word. The meeting there under the

circumstances was a trifle perplexing. Donald's expression was almost forbidding as he awkwardly pulled off his cap.

"Miss Garrick, I believe?"

"How are you, Donald?" cried Dr. Ericsson, stepping into the light. "I haven't seen you for an age." And he seized him by the shoulder.

"Oh, I'm all right!" he said indifferently. "You'll have to walk to the hotel. The cab service is very deficient here. We've all got to live like paupers whether we like it or not."

He hurried ahead, the effort of being conventionally polite evidently a new rôle.

"I'll show you the way," he said brusquely.

"I say, Donald," — and Dr. Ericsson's tone was just as genial as when he had first spoken, — "are things very bad?"

Donald's stormy eyes flashed from beneath the rim of his cap. His tone was almost insolent.

"Hell is loose here," he said.

Chapter VII

IT was a dark morning and Dr. Ericsson's mood matched it. He had rheumatism. It had rained for three days, was still raining, and they had again given him fried bread for breakfast.

"Thank God, sunshine and laughter are in the world somewhere! It is well to remember that here," he said, poking the fire furiously.

Anne stood near him, drawing on a pair of loose dogskin gloves. A fur cap fitted like a bandage above her troubled eyes.

"Tuck me in, Anne dear. Then look out, like a good girl, and see if there's a break in the dirty sky."

She swept the rag of curtain aside and gazed on the marvels of desolation before her. The hotel was on one of

the highest hills, and she could see mountains of coal waste looming black in the mist; rivers like ink flowing beneath gaunt bridges; vast hollows of moist, shrunken land above the mines spreading like emptied arteries beneath the surface; houses, as if shaken by palsy, leaning sideways upon erratic foundations; and over all a light rain driven by a wind from the east.

“The sky is as dull as ever,” said Anne, still standing with the curtain in her hand, and she added in a vehement whisper: “It’s all wrong, uncle. There’s something horribly wrong with the world.”

“Have you just found that out?”

“Last night as we came home from the funeral of the man ‘Red’ Evans killed” — her voice trembled — “it came to me what these people are. They are the moving, untombed dead. The starving men guarding the black pits, the women, nothing but child-bearing blocks, the picker boys with their undersized, ghastly bodies,

have dead souls, uncle, — quite, quite dead.”

“Don’t look so tragic, my dear. One comfort — they don’t know how really badly off they are; brought up to it, you see.”

“I know it,” — the curtain slipped from Anne’s fingers, — “but that’s what makes me fairly sick when I think of it — their apathy, their stolid acceptance of all. They don’t crave anything except enough food to keep them quiet, and they can’t get that. Then one of them grows frantic and the rest follow. Only now and then there’s a ‘Red’ Evans who has hate enough in him to kill the insulting despot who ruined his daughter, and who has been crushing and cheating him for years. He went mad, and now the law is loose hunting for ‘Red’ Evans as terriers hunt for a rat. If they find him they’ll hang him; and this is justice, of course. But why need ‘Red’ Evans ever have become what he was? Why? It’s such a big, terrible question.”

Dr. Ericsson caught her hand and kissed it.

“You should have put an iron casing round those too ready sympathies of yours, Anne, before you came here. We’ll have a very hard time of it if we try to change conditions which have always been,” he said mildly. “Besides, I’ve come to the conclusion myself, for my own satisfaction, that the small things of life are inevitably balanced here; so life in total, with all its oppositions and wrongs, must be as evenly balanced somewhere else. What are your plans for to-day? I wish I could go with you and Sefain. Confound this uncertain leg of mine!”

“I’m first going with money to ‘Red’ Evans’ sister,” said Anne, seating herself on the arm of his chair and opening her notebook. “Then I want to see the interior of a mine, if it’s possible. I’d like to get an idea of the graves where these men spend their days. To-night I must get a long ‘special’ ready.”

“Sefain must go with you every-

where. Don't forget that. Good-by, my dear. Don't fret over what can't be helped. Remember all workers are not like these. Think of niggers singing in a lily-field! Ah, I wish I were there now!"

Anne hurried down the stairs and found Donald waiting for her with a venerable carriage. He did not see her as she came up to him. Standing just outside the doorway, an Inverness cape flapping around him, he was sketching in the salient points of a noisy group across the road. One man stood on a barrel, his arms held up, while in howls he called on the others to resist. Around him were a score of men, — Huns, Poles, with a smaller mixture of Irish and English, — their working jeans discarded for antique and yellowed broadcloth. They were all stupidly listening without sign of answering spirit, their faces showing that they were hungry and shivering.

Donald was never fully aroused except when he worked. His brown,

nervous fingers held the book intently, his eyes flashed keenly from the page to the men, but his dark face looked pinched in the raw morning. His air was frankly dissolute.

When Anne spoke to him, the smile of which he always seemed ashamed made his face attractive for a second before it settled again into the usual ungracious quiet.

The horse went at a crawling pace over the hills and across swampy land, and they talked of the work for the paper as if they were two men. No personalities were touched upon. There was nothing to brighten the drive, and after a long distance covered in the face of a mist that made Anne's cheeks like pale, wet roses they stopped before the house where "Red" Evans had lived.

The clamor following disgrace surrounded it. Women bowed by the malformations of toil and years stood shoulder to shoulder with idle men, all talking loudly, their eyes fastened upon the sulphur-hued cottage, whose under

story, from the trembling of the tunnelled land, had been shot out like a hag's jaw.

"She's in there," said Donald. "They say she's like a crazy woman. I'll go in with you."

He tied the horse to a post and shielded Anne through the curious crowd. After some imperative knocking and promises of help to the woman shrieking abuse from within, the door was guardedly opened, and they stood before "Red" Evans' sister.

Anne shuddered at the face. The forces in a soul that damn seemed to have set fire to all the softness in the woman and left their flames blazing in her hollow eyes. With lank, gray hair falling to her shoulders, and veined hands clinched at her sides, she stood at bay in the desolate room, bitten through with grief, an epitome of hatred, famine, and fear. Unnoticed, Donald swiftly made a sketch of her and at a sign from Anne slipped out, leaving her to her difficult task.

In the warmth of her sympathy and gratitude for the visible help she brought, the beast in the sufferer was conquered, and with wild weeping she told the story of her life. She had been born on a sheep farm in Scotland near a river winding through a valley, and had left it to come to her brother when his wife died. Anne saw the lost home plainly as the homely sentences sketched it — a place of perfume, light, and healthy sleep; she realized the gloomy change to this black valley with “Red” Evans, the morbid slave; his daughter, pretty and wild, ready to sell her soul for a trinket and at length flying away in shame; and the younger son, Joe, a picker boy, choked with miner’s asthma.

“An’ ye’ll write what I tell ye, miss. Ye’ll spek the truth. Ye’ll belike mek people a bit sorry. Aye, aye,” she said, nodding at the dead ashes on the hearth, “ye’ll say our hearts are breakin’, that shame and hunger’s eno’ to mek men distraught; but, ah, miss, ye won’t mek

'em feel it; ye can't mek 'em feel it! I'd ha' to tek my heart out and put it inside ye before ye could know what I do, an' what I canna tell ye, miss."

Anne could not utter one of the comforting, philosophical things she had fancied at her command. She let her hand rest for an instant on the forehead where care had set a skein of tangled lines, gave a circular glance in the hopeless room, and went out, her heart affrighted.

Donald was not among the crowd, but she went on, expecting him to join her. He did not appear, and soon she found herself close to the mine around which the straggling village was built.

Before her stood the high, coal-blackened building similar to a wooden lighthouse, which miners call a breaker. She knew when the mines were working big cars were impelled up to this height from the fastnesses of the earth, that there the coal was broken, sorted, and sent down through iron grooves to waiting cars. A feeling of curiosity im-

pelled her to go up. It would be strange to stand in a high breaker, look out on a level with the hills, fancy the riven coal leaping down the rafters, and there write her notes of the morning.

Passing the silent engine-houses and empty furnaces, she went up the steep ladders to the top. On the last step she paused, made suddenly aware that the breaker was tenanted. Donald was sketching some one. Moving to one side, unseen, she saw that the model was little Joe Evans, the murderer's son. He had assumed his working position beside an empty shoot, his head lowered, his hand extended, as if picking the refuse from the sliding coal. He had evidently digested the fact that his picture was being made for a newspaper, for there was exaltation in his face. Hidden in the shadow, Anne leaned against one of the posts and watched.

"The air must be filled with dust when the coal comes tumbling down before you," Donald was saying, and

he whistled softly as he waited for a reply.

"It's that what gives us the asthma," said Joe, backing up his words by a most awful cough.

"Got anything on under that rag of a coat?" asked Donald cheerfully. "Let's see."

The child's blue pallor went crimson, but in a half fearful way he opened the jacket and bared his puny chest.

"All right," Donald nodded. "I wanted to know; that's all." And he commenced whistling softly, while Anne's heart grew hot. This was artistic savagery run amuck.

"How old are you, Joe?"

"Nine."

"What do you think of all day as you sit picking the slate from the coal?"

"Nuthin'!" His violet eyes were vapid wells between grimy lashes.

"Do you know what the sea is, Joe?"

He shook his head negatively without any interest.

“The great shining sea where ships sail — never saw that, Joe? Just turn your head a little the other way — so. Often hungry, I suppose?”

Joe smiled wanly as if at a jest. There was no need to affirm a self-evident truth.

“The coal rushing down the shoot without a moment of rest must make your head ache, I should think?”

Joe forgot about the proper angle for showing off his knife-blade chin and drawn eyelid. He dropped his head to his scrap of a hand ornamented by knuckles and nails beyond redemption. His eyes looked up with unquestioning patience.

“It always aches. It’s achin’ now.”

A sigh came from the dry mouth, and it had the effect of a clarion call on Donald. The apathy went from him. He flung his book to the floor. His face was twitching. His eyes burned.

“My God, child, how terrible you are!” Kneeling, he brought his face to a level with Joe’s, his hands grasping the boy’s shoulders.

“Don’t be afraid, Joe. Don’t cry. I’m not mad,” he said, a sob creeping between his set teeth. “Oh, you poor little chap, you sad-eyed little slave! Oh, hungry and sick and old, and only nine, picking the coal the whole day through, thinking of nothing and breathing death! Joe! Joe! Where is your God and mine, that a child like you exists under the sky?”

Fascinated, shrinking, Joe looked into his eyes and said nothing. Anne could hear her heart in the stillness, her eyes fastened first on Donald’s discarded sketch-book, then on his kneeling figure.

“Joe,” he said, after a long silence, and now his voice was quiet, “something wonderful is going to happen to you, something better than your starved mind can understand. I’m going to take you to a great big city with me.

I'm going to give you good things to eat, better than anything you ever tasted, — warm clothes, too," he said, slipping his hand through the broken jacket and laying it on Joe's flesh. "You shall see the sea and everything that boys love. Oh, I've never loved anything, but I'll love you! You'll be a happy boy yet, if it's not too late" — he groaned defiantly — "if it's not too late. Oh, you poor little baby, with your terribly wise eyes, will you come with me? Joe, will you?"

Anne made her way down the shaking ladders without being heard. Her swollen heart seemed crowding her throat. She stood in the chilling rain, quivering with excitement. She had had her first glimpse into Donald's soul, and it had terrified her.

It was still early when they returned for lunch to the hotel. Joe, stunned into silence and with round eyes, accompanied them.

"I'm going to adopt him," was all the explanation of his presence Donald

had given. He was again as unreadable as a mollusk, and Anne could almost believe the scene in the breaker had been of her imagining.

Hours afterward, as she sat in the rainy dusk writing an impassioned account of the day, a faint knock sounded on her door. Donald stood outside, very pale, an unusual eagerness in his manner.

“If you want to see what a mine looks like, Miss Garrick, this will be your only chance. The sheriff and his men have come over with militia, and for the past hour the engines have been going, pumping down air, you know. They think that perhaps ‘Red’ Evans is hiding there.”

“But could he? How could he get down if the cage wasn’t working?”

“You see, besides the cage there’s an iron bar — a sort of ladder with flat prongs laid upon it, the whole only half a yard wide. This goes down through a separate opening. It’s put there as a precaution in case of explosions or in-

jury to the cage, but it's a matter of life and death to use it. A desperate man, however, wouldn't hesitate to take the one chance. The sheriff fancies 'Red' Evans may be clinging to the bar a good way down beyond sight, yet not too far from the air. I don't believe it. It's almost absurd. But they're going down and will take us along."

"All right," said Anne. "But I won't tell Dr. Ericsson. He might be nervous."

Twenty minutes later they were again at the mine. The scene was animated now. Lanterns like the eyes of grotesque animals shot from one point to another in the falling night. A line of soldiers controlled the swell of the mountain, and, above, the strikers with their families sullenly watched. From wooden sheds came the braying of mules. Four men stood near the cage, which resembled a huge brass boiler with a round opening for air at a man's height. The hissing and throbbing of engines and the sound

of many voices filled the valley with life.

Anne's fingers were unsteady as she put on the miner's protecting outfit. This was a rubber blouse to her knees and a wide-brimmed glazed hat, a little oil lamp flickering in front just above the brim.

"Ready!" said the sheriff, and the wire rope throbbed.

The cage shot down with tremendous speed. The lamps on the hats flared in the gust through the circular opening in the wall. It was a breathless, anxious descent. Anne closed her eyes and stood like one in a trance until the journey was completed.

When by Donald's side she stepped into the underworld, an overwhelming depression seized her. She had not dreamed how the knowledge of being two thousand feet beneath the ground she trod so lightly could chill a heart. The rank, moist place smelled of death. She gazed at the jagged ceiling of coal upheld by tremendous tree-trunks

placed at regular distances and forming a rude aisle, the fungi on props and beams, the green pools in every depression, the empty mule-carts and discarded picks. Just where the hat-lamps flung their beams there was light, and beyond lay appalling mystery.

“You’d better sit on this knoll;” and Donald, circling his lantern over his head, showed her the up-hill recesses of a vast, worked-out chamber. “I’ll go with the men down this gangway a bit. We’ll not be far away. See, they’re looking in the mule-carts. I’d like to be on the spot if they get him. I want his face.”

“I’ll be alone here!” was Anne’s inward exclamation. “You won’t be long,” was what she said, and sat down apparently calm.

“We’re just going down this gangway.” And Donald turned away, his fingers tingling to sketch her as she sat there, the light flaring above her eyes.

Ten minutes passed. Anne saw

the men entering the various hewn chambers, plunging their lanterns into clumsy carts, leaping into pits. Her heart seemed to have ceased beating. She found herself waiting for a cry of triumph and fancied the searchers dragging out a struggling, stormy-browed figure, the murderer at bay.

Then an unlooked-for thing happened. Without warning the moving throng of figures turned a corner, and she was alone, in silence save for the dropping of water, in darkness save for the light upon her hat. She seemed to become stone surrounded by an atmosphere of horror.

This paralyzing spell broke, and her blood crept in cold currents around her spine, for up in the black hollow behind her she heard a quick breath, then another, and a piece of coal tinkled down the declivity to her feet. The breathing came closer. It was just behind her now. There was a step, and she knew a horror unnamable stood at her back. She did not turn or

move the stiff fingers clasping her knee, or flicker an eyelid.

She was roused from the weight of terror by a sight to haunt her while she lived. A man grovelled before her, his supplicating clutch upon her knee. The uncertain flame of her lamp flung blue splashes into the hollows of his face. His red hair was glued to his throat. The red-streaked flannel shirt was open to the waist, showing his hairy chest. Mildew and coal-black covered him. There was a mortal hunger in his glance. She was gazing at "Red" Evans and he was praying for his life—but praying was a mild word for the spurting whispers from his gaping mouth as his eyes shot from right to left in fear of the returning hunters.

"Didn't set out for to kill Binkley, as God hears me, miss. No, 'twas fair fight, an he druv me mad. I flung the stone. I didn't believe him dead till he fell back, wi' the blood bubblin' from him. I been hidin' here for two days, starvin' on that ladder, 'tween earth

and hell; crawled down when the engines begun to work; been lyin' on my face up here ever sence. They'll hang me. Don't let 'em. Help me. I've had a hard life eno' 'thout hangin' at the end o't. Oh," and the word was a long shudder, "my God, for one chance! I never had noan. One chance — one!"

It seemed to Anne as if a great length of time had passed, as if herself and her life were myths, and nothing in all the world was as positive as this man's misery and his claim. She sat motionless with strained, bright eyes.

He had taken another's life, it was clear. She was a newspaper woman, face to face with an important opportunity. If she gave the murderer to his pursuers, the "Citizen" would have gained a story unshared by its rivals. As a newspaper woman she should make the most of this moment. She hesitated. The man's eyes looked up at her like a famished dog's. As a newspaper woman, yes; but as a woman, no.

She sprang up, fired by the desire to save him. His eyes were terrible as he crouched in the slime at her feet. He had suffered enough.

"Come along," she said, her voice harsh with fear as a man's laugh distantly awakened echoes in the caverns. "They've already searched the mule-carts. Climb into this one. They won't look again. Lie down low—so. I'll put my cloak over you. Try to breathe more softly. Hush! They're coming."

Donald hurried toward her first, and found her sitting where he had left her.

"Wagner said he'd come back and stay near you," he said hurriedly, as he wiped his brow. "I've just found out that he sneaked on, the little beast."

"Did you find any trace of Evans?" she managed to ask.

"No, he's not here. They might have known that. You're shivering. Why, where's your cloak?"

"Say nothing about that," she said

in sudden fear, springing up. "Manage to have the others go up first. I'll explain after. They must go up first. Leave me here."

The cage had been very crowded coming down, and when every worked out recess had been searched the men were glad to let the newspaper people wait for a second trip.

"Well, that's settled," Anne heard a man say, his throaty tones inflated with satisfaction. "He ain't in the mine, he ain't on the ladder, and damn him wherever he is."

The cage leaped beyond her sight. Donald, with the ineffectual light making big shadows leap around him, came down the alley and stood before her. He knew some disclosure was trembling on her lips.

"We're alone now," he said. "You look awful. Take a little."

He held out a flask of whiskey, and Anne greedily swallowed a mouthful. It revived her and made her brave again. She listened to the creaking of

the wire ropes, but instead of fear her eyes flashed with determination.

“I’m going to trust you, Donald Se-fain,” she said slowly, rising and touching his arm. “Yes, I’m going to trust you. I believe in your pity and your honor.”

His eyes answered her; he held his breath.

“I know where ‘Red’ Evans is,” she said. “He’s near us, hidden under my cloak. He begged his life — oh, how he begged it! — and I couldn’t give him up. He prayed for one chance. I’ll give it to him. Will you?”

Anne pressed her hands upon his shoulders, the divinity of a mediator in her eyes.

A flood of feeling trickled over Donald’s heart, something never felt before; it was like a fire loosening some callous growth, and seeming by a miracle to turn it to sunshine within him.

“Yes, yes,” he said, the perplexing joy still controlling him. “What can we do?”

“There’s only one way ‘Red’ Evans can escape,” she continued rapidly. “I’ve money with me. I’ll give it to him. But that doesn’t help matters while he’s hidden here. The only way he can leave the mine unquestioned is by putting on your blouse and hat, and taking your place when I go up. Once he’s freed, I’ll return for you. This is my plan—to pretend I lost some money and come back with these things I wear secreted under my own cloak for you, to slip them to you, have you put them on, step out unnoticed and join the searchers for the money. It will be easy enough. We’re all of a pattern in these things, and with the collar up and one’s face turned away they make a good disguise. But should there be any comment you’d have to insist that you came down with me the second time. Are you willing? Will you risk it? I promise to return for you.”

In answer Donald took off the long blouse and hat and saw Anne’s eyes

darken with gratitude. She pointed to the mule-cart.

“He’s there, and you’ll need to give him some whiskey, he’s so weak.”

After putting out the light upon his hat, which had begun to flicker, Donald stepped across an oozing stream and leaned over the cart.

“Evans! Evans! Look up! Here’s your chance. This hat and blouse”—He broke off abruptly. “Why doesn’t he answer?”

He bent nearer and touched the head and face of the hidden man.

“Oh, if he’s fainted how can we save him? There isn’t a moment,” whispered Anne, in a frenzy of fear.

Donald climbed into the mule-cart and plunged down.

“He’s dead!”

The words rang out. The echoes carried them and played with them. No need of plans, sacrifice, danger. Freedom and the hangman were alike impossible and indifferent to “Red” Evans now.

Anne saw Donald's face lifted, touched by the awe always following the wake of the great mystery, but only for a few seconds before her lamp went out with a long leap, as if protesting against some new uncanny presence, and they were in darkness with the dead.

Anne sank down, her folded arms resting against a wet wall. Everything seemed to slip into a mist; she felt numbed, vanquished, when, like a promise of good, Donald's groping hand sought hers and held it firmly. They did not speak. It was a burden even to think of the horrors surrounding them — the masses of coal not far above their heads, creaking like a lazy monster settling itself, the whimpering of flying rats, and the knowledge that beside them lay a dead man, a look of affright on his face.

After a while it became evident that something delayed the return of the cage. Hours seemed to crawl by as they sat there, hand in hand, scarcely

speaking until it became imperative to talk and let sound trouble the black pall dividing and overhanging them.

Then something happened that seemed to Anne beyond belief. Donald in hesitating tones began speaking of himself. To see the lips of the Sphinx melt into a smile could scarcely have been more astounding to her. She listened, understanding how the sights and sounds of that terrible day and the intimate hand-clasp in the blackness had aroused the inner self he so consistently silenced.

Her heart smarted for him as she heard the halting story of his childhood. She could see him left orphaned, under an unfriendly roof, no natural love excusing his faults, loneliness eating into him. Loneliness! It was the word on which his life had reared its twisted structure.

In words that burned he sketched the difference between David's place and his in John Temple's house — David, secretly loved by him always and bitterly envied; David, the figure in the

white light which he might adore, but never follow. He told her how manhood came and the bitter knowledge of all. He was despised, superfluous, and the determination took root to fulfil the promise of his dark origin, to sink to the level considered fitting.

A stronger nature would have doggedly risen, no doubt. But the other was easy, natural, and had not been without joy. The poor, the unhappy like himself, had understood and loved him. For the rest he had grown content to tear principles to rags, revel in the mud, live for the moment, and go with flags flying to ruin and death.

“Why didn’t you try to do well?” Anne asked urgently.

“I was afraid,” he said, in a lifeless tone. “I thought it wouldn’t do for me with the inherited tendencies of which I was so constantly reminded. Besides, no one cared. That was it. It’s all well enough to talk of doing right, but when your instinct leads you to the wrong and there’s not a soul on earth

to care a pin if you're fished out of the river, a boy — at least most boys — would get into an easy stride on the wrong road."

"No, you needn't have gone," she said passionately.

"I'm not trying to excuse myself."

"But you're not hopeless, are you?"

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I ought to be. I have been. But tonight, somehow, I wish I could begin over again."

He heard a sob. All Anne had felt during the trying day and the pathos of this confidence had touched her beyond endurance. She wept unrestrainedly from a full heart. She could not see Donald's eyes nor how they grew intent and unbelieving. It seemed impossible that he should hear a woman's sobs for him, tears for him. They were terrible and racked him, but they were sweet too.

Before he could fully accept the wonderful occurrence as true, and before Anne could control herself to speak,

the grating of the wire ropes in the shaft cautiously commenced.

A light sprang into Donald's face, and despite the opposing forces tearing him like teeth he pressed her hand and said, in a whisper that was slow and difficult:

"If I do make anything of myself, if I ever do, it won't be because it's right, nor for society, nor even for shame of what I am, but because you care. Say that you do."

"Yes," she said, "I care. Indeed — indeed — I do!"

When they entered the cage, Anne's tear-swollen face needed no explanation. To have been kept in a mine for an hour without a light because part of the machinery had slipped its groove, and to have chanced upon "Red" Evans, dead, was enough to unnerve any woman.

Only Anne and Donald ever knew the truth of that hour. They stepped into the night and saw the moon filling the place with phosphoric light, making

a glory of the drenched earth. More marvellous than this white atmosphere of peace after the stormy day, was the friendship which had put forth sudden flower in silence and night.

Chapter VIII

AFTER three weeks among the mines, Anne returned to New York. She had left the city frowning under fogs: it greeted her home-coming with a cold sky as blue as in summer, the peace of freshly fallen snow, and the glint of icicles in a vivid sunlight.

After luncheon as she prepared for her first visit to the office, everything was forgotten but the thought of seeing David again. He would greet her as a friend returning; she would regard him with a new vision, the knowledge of her love, a secret to be sternly kept.

When she walked from the elevator to the editorial rooms, she was pale, expectant, her heart stirring with a nervous excitement. Never before had she crossed that hall, subdued by this

uncertainty and joy, nor opened the door, wishing, yet dreading, to hear David Temple's voice.

The first circuitous glance told her he was not there, nor in his private room beyond, for the door stood open. But the scarred man was in evidence and vaulted over his desk to meet her, the news editor took the trouble to wipe his hands on a blotter before greeting her, and the dramatic critic, who didn't like women anywhere, and hated them in a newspaper office, blew his nose nervously. Donald Sefain alone at his desk, with frowning brow, looked at her once and looked down, white to the lips.

Jack Braidley swung in, the tall hat he wore on all occasions pushed far back, half a dozen actresses' photographs protruding from his pocket. In his excitement at seeing Anne he dropped the best cigar he had borrowed that day, and rushed forward to seize her hand.

But he had to make room for Pete,

who danced a hornpipe on a desk, having left the sporting editor's side while the promise of a tip on the coming prize-fight trembled on his lips.

Anne patted Pete's bitten, dirty hand, thrust impulsively into hers, then looked over at Donald. He was bending above a sketch, and she was struck by the contrast between his sunken cheeks and the faces of the men around her.

As if doing a most usual thing, she walked past the little group to his desk. She could feel the consternation of the watchers as she bent over, facing the worker, her back to the rest.

"You've not spoken to me," and the smile upon the lifted, crimson lip was a frank invitation to good-fellowship.

The blood rushed to Donald's face, his eyes fell. A glance over her shoulder at the men he had always striven to antagonize was sufficient to bring the old gloom to his eyes, the defiance to his manner.

"You're very kind," he said coldly;

“but I’m used to being ignored. In fact, I prefer it.”

Anne regarded him thoughtfully and read him aright. He hesitated, he was not sure of her, of himself. Habitude had become a garment fitting like another skin; it was a risk to discard it, for, hateful though it might appear, there was shelter in its folds. But she was not to be so easily put aside.

“I’m going to annoy you, nevertheless,” she said coolly. “You want to break our pretty compact. Well, I’m not going to let you. I can be persistent, Mr. Sefain. I can be intensely disagreeable. But most people end in liking me, and so shall you. Hereafter we are to be friends. You said so. Come, shake hands.”

Challenge and entreaty were in her eyes. Donald hesitated only a second. His hand touched hers. Obeying an uncontrollable impulse he beat back the painful reserve tempting him to be ungracious, and pressed the slender fingers painfully. It was more than the most

eloquent acknowledgment of her power from another man. In the garish sunlight of this prosaic, dusty place, the words spoken in the lonely mine had been ratified by that handclasp, and Donald had assumed a new, important interest in the eyes of his companions.

At five o'clock Anne left the office. It was a winter evening to fill the mind with light, the heart with hope. The gloom of the mines had lain heavily upon her, their horrors had dragged her heart-strings, but in this cold, white world, as she moved among the quick-stepping throng, she tingled again with the joy of living.

Instead of going home, she took the car as far as Madison square. When she alighted and looked around she felt as if moving with a thousand others in a magical place. People met here in converging streams and poured away in every direction, touched by the long lances of spectral brilliancy coming through riven clouds at the west. Blending with this was the purplish-

pink lustre of the many electric lights around the snowy square, and the spreading glow from an early-risen moon crossed by a tangle of denuded boughs.

She went lightly on, touched in passing by all sorts and conditions of people, and hearing infinitesimal bits of a hundred conversations. She knew that solitude in a vast crowd which can be despair or peace according to one's mood. Then what seemed a marvelous thing happened : one came out of the moving mass and spoke her name. It was David Temple, the light from the west on his face.

“Anne !” he said gladly, and again “Anne !”

The pallor and thinness his illness had left touched her with pity, and this weakness in his strength attracted her powerfully.

“I'm so glad to see you !” and he held her hand.

He turned homeward with her. They went down the broad avenue

sinking rapidly into shadow. It was a wonderful hour to Anne. The witchery of the night was in her blood ; the love growing so silently and strongly within her filled her with sweet trouble.

Hours afterwards she sat before the fire, thinking of David's every look and word, and in her open hands lay a bunch of violets he had bought for her from an Italian boy. Their breath was a caress, as his voice speaking her name had been. He had never before called her Anne. It must be so he thought of her.

A sense of joy made her light-headed. She was something to him ! The light in his earnest eyes had told her that ! The world was beautiful. It was good to be alive, young, free, as she was. Sorrow surely was but a word. Hope and love were real, and they were hers. While she lived she would never forget that December evening. It had been a little thing—a chance meeting in a crowd, a surprised word, a treasured look, a memory to

have a never-dying brilliancy, a jewel connecting links in the chain of events.

When she put away her dreaming, and sat before the desk to continue on her novel, it was late. The idea of the story had been with her all day ; she had felt herself *en rapport* with her characters, the glow of creation had seized her as she walked among the crowd on Madison square.

Now her pen lay idle. Fancy retreated before the personal interests holding her, as the sun, though brilliantly shining, may be hidden from the gazer by the intervention of one leaf. There was too much of self in every heart-beat, too much of love and the Might Be. The thrilling consciousness of one face barred her entrance to the imagined land. She was so happy she could not write.

Lingeringly she closed the desk and drew the violets towards her.

Chapter IX

BY the middle of December even the most careless in the office of the "Citizen" had commented upon the change in Donald Sefain. He was no longer the voluntary recluse, a man parading his vices, eager to be judged by them alone. He had learned to believe in his possibilities. His fettered nature, feeding on all that was rotten, had risen like a dazed, hungry thing following an instinct for better food and freedom. Ambition, a rebellious prisoner always, had revived in him after he had striven to crucify it. It called to him in the long nights, in his lonely walks, and its voice was somehow Anne's:

"What have you done with your life?"

The assertion of his best instincts had left their marks upon the outer man.

His antagonism and gloom had almost vanished; so had his untidiness and air of general dissoluteness. He carried himself better, his clothes were better, and they were worn as if he respected them and himself.

As his habits mended and his work steadily improved David Temple treated him as a worker whom he prized. A closer degree of intimacy between the two men seemed impossible. They saw each other seldom, save in the office. But Anne was the friend of both.

David visited her less often than in the summer, his engagements were so many, but every hour he could spare was spent in her pretty, out-of-the-way rooms. He let the social mask fall when with her as with no one else. Any one seeing him pacing up and down her room, a privileged cigar between his fingers, as he indulged in brilliant nonsense, laughing like a boy when he pulled her pet theories to bits as if he blew away loose rose-petals, would scarcely have known him.

Anne loved these hours with him, and her happiness went with her, absorbing her thoughts to the detriment of the art so dear to her. The pen lay dry upon the sheets of her novel. She no longer struggled against the passionate effacement of self in another's being. She did not torment her heart by looking for a growing love in David's eyes. She was content to drift. It was evident to all that he was very fond of her. He sought her familiarly. She knew nothing of his life beyond the small horizon of her own, and feeling an anticipative joy which seemed to melt her future with his, she was content.

Dr. Ericsson had much to engross him and keep him away. The wild winter weather had brought the usual illnesses, and the Waverly-place house was in chaos, preparing for the arrival of his wife and daughter after an absence of eight years.

Anne had plenty of leisure, and she gave much of it to Donald Sefain. Between them they made some of those

winter nights idyls of joy for little Joe Evans. He was very ill. Giving way to rest after inured hardship seemed like giving way to grief, and his weak body collapsed.

He was in Donald's new home,—three small rooms in a street a short distance from the "Citizen." They were cheap apartments, but hopefully clean, presided over by a "lone" woman, Mrs. Mulligan, who lived on the floor beneath.

Anne often went home with Donald in the swift-falling winter dusks, and stepping from the hall into the firelight, she would feel as if summer had come across the snow and kissed her. The room was always fragrant from a bunch of flowers, the kettle always singing, the lamp shaded.

"Ah, Joe, dear, if yez had seen me whin I was young!" she had surprised Mrs. Mulligan saying once as she knitted beside the pillowed chair where Joe reclined, pale from the languor of unhealthy sleep. "There was a sight for

ye! The girls of to-day, with their crotched-in bodies and white cheeks stuck to the bone,—what are they? Ah, avick, girls were different in moy toime! Why, I shtud fourteen stone, weighed in me stockings. Me hair shtud out loike eaves on both soides of me head, alanna, 'twas so thick. As fer me cheeks," she added, in a climax of triumph, "they shtuck out loike apples, and were that red ye cud bleed them with a shtraw."

On nights like these Donald's nature seemed to expand and exult. He surprised Anne by his humor, his mocking grace as host, his boyish play with Joe, who adored him. Sometimes when he read aloud after dinner and Mrs. Mulligan sat motionless as the Sphinx save for the darting needles, Anne knelt on the floor, her arms around the boy. His feverish mouth would creep close to her ear, and he would tell her how he loved Mr. Sefain, and how he was never to go back to the mines, never. Anne would assure him of this while holding

him to her and kissing him in a little storm of love, and then her eyes would rove over him, his hands with no more substance than claws, dry and hot, his hungry eyes seeming to hold life like a picture before them in an endeavor to see all quickly before the short day ended.

It was Donald who showed Anne some of the singular sides of the city's life.

During this season of pure frost when the electric wires spanning the town were turned into glacial ribbons, and the noise of traffic on the frozen ground was like the clamor from brass, she often found herself treading the narrow, uphill streets in the lower quarter of the city to see some marvellous "find" of his.

Once it was an old Russian musician, a political exile. The room they found him in was wretched, but in a corner stood a *samovar* of copper fit for a prince's table. This and the Amati on the old man's knee were the only visible

relics of a sumptuous past. Bending over the decaying fire, he had played wild and terrible music for them, which awoke strange fancies. It seemed to whisper of a spirit haunting a familiar but empty house where moonlight streamed through the bare windows ; it shrieked of shipwreck, mumbled of witches dancing in a haggard dawn, prayed for life while the block and the headsman waited. The unsyllabled desolation of the exile's life, it had haunted her for days.

Although working in the office of a world-known newspaper, she had never seen the wonders of the mechanism used in its construction until one midnight Donald took her to the press-room. There was a weighty but soundless vibration as she went down the stone stairs, but when the iron door was pushed back the noise was so tremendous it leaped out like a bar and struck her. A gust of air accompanied it which seemed to suck her down the ladder-like stairway against her will, until, dazzled

and bewildered, she stood on a little bridge overlooking a plateau of steel that leaped and shivered in gigantic sockets. Bare-chested men like sweating pygmies stood between the big machines, and above them, a monster of many jaws, the roaring presses snapped up the paper. On the first page there was a portrait of a murderer, and this was repeated all over the gas-lit space. On every side the sinister visage with eyes turned obliquely toward her came riding into view, and the glittering clamps seized it, seemed to crush it furiously, until, like the stone Sisyphus rolled, it appeared again, and the task was incessantly continued.

It was Donald who showed her the underground restaurants where the newspaper "hacks" plunged in the early morning hours for coffee that was like a fluid blessing. She went with him to all sorts of queer and storied nooks. Once they had tea in a place known only to a few privileged scribblers. This was in a sort of *cul-de-sac*, a swinging

lamp lighting the way up the long alley. Separated from the noise of the town and waited upon by a genial French host and his wife, they had seemed in Paris, for the secretive niche in the crowded street might have strayed from one of Hugo's stories and settled, out of countenance, in a commercial atmosphere.

Together they went to well-known studios where all was harmony and beauty — idols sombrously contemplative, mediæval windows, wood-carving from India and rugs from Damascus. She had watched the last touches put to a landscape, had seen a sculptor make lips of clay smile as if he had called life there.

Donald had taken her behind the scenes of a theatre, and she had watched the progress of a play from the wings, had gazed with critical eyes and a sense of illusions lost at the mechanism of what had so often enchanted her — exits, entrances, cues, and prompter's book.

And they had read much together —

the exquisite prose of Huysmans and Mallarme, Kipling's crushing phrases painting the arid glitter of India, "Tess," bare-armed and fawn-eyed, loving tragically in a setting of clover and dawn mists, the fatalism of the "Rubáiyát," and the wholesome cynicism of Thackeray.

They shared all together as comrades and confidants. The boy in Donald and the piquant school-girl only masked in the woman, clasped hands and laughed.

Chapter X

ONE morning late in January Anne opened the sheets of the "Citizen" and saw this item among the society notes:

"Among the passengers on the 'Teutonic,' which arrived in port last night, were Mrs. Lansius Ericsson and Miss Olga Ericsson. The latter is the latest of our young countrywomen to return to America with a London reputation for beauty."

Five days later Anne stepped from the grayness of the raw afternoon into Dr. Ericsson's house. Her aunt had been in charge but a little while, yet the old house under her reign possessed what Anne felt it never could have had without her. A maid who was inoffensive of voice and light of step took up her card, an open fire invited her,

the aromatic odor of green things growing in a winter room filled the air, the light was toned to a pale yellow, as if a sunset had happened prematurely. It was evident Mrs. Ericsson had a genius for selecting the salient requisites of an inviting home.

"Anne Garrick," said a languid voice behind her, "how d'you do?"

She turned to face the aunt she but faintly remembered, a small, nervous woman, pale-haired, anxious-eyed, so restless she seemed like one half-pausing in a hurry before continuing the pursuit of something.

She gave Anne her pale cheek to kiss, and exclaimed:

"How like your father! You're a Garrick. You are not a Gerard."

The inflection was disapproving. Anne felt guilty for not looking like her mother. She began an apology for not having called before, but with amazing irrelevancy Mrs. Ericsson darted for the door.

"Olga is upstairs. Come up. We've

been waiting lunch for you for fifteen minutes. It's all right, only with us every moment is of such importance. All the morning Olga has been trying on hats."

She turned at the top of the stairs, looking like a distracted sparrow.

"She won't have a hat without a brim. Did you ever hear anything like it? Felice came all the way from Madison avenue with ten hats, all close fitting, and we begged her to try one. She wouldn't, not if I went on my knees. Olga can be so set! Try and talk her over to a toque. It's simply madness to insist on a brim when nobody is wearing one."

Again Anne felt like a culprit. The felt-and-feather creation on her head had a brim. It was useless to expect to find favor in her aunt's eyes, since, looking like her father, she came wearing a big hat.

"Here's Anne Garrick at last!" And Mrs. Ericsson entered a big bay-windowed room as inviting as fluted Swiss

curtains and pale green appointments could make it.

A young woman was beside a window, a manicure set spread out on a small table before her, and she was examining a pink nail, much as a jeweller does the springs of a watch.

"You dear thing! How are you?" she said, going to meet Anne, and they kissed each other.

"Let me look at you, Olga," said Anne, turning her to the light. "I've heard you are beautiful. Mr. Tinkle, our society editor, saw you at the opera last night and has talked about you all the morning."

Olga lifted her head lazily in a challenging way and with a purring laugh.

"Upon my word! Fancy!" she said, with an English accent, as Anne looked at her. "What do you think? Am I?"

"Yes, you are."

Few women would have welcomed criticism in that green setting and raw light. The two emphatic qualities of Olga's beauty, etherealness and deli-

cacy, did not suffer. She was extraordinarily white. The skin on supple throat and quiet cheek was of almost silvery pallor. Moonlight seemed bathing her pale blond hair. Her greenish-gray eyes were dreamy, the pupils large ; her upper lip very short, full, and coral pink. "A moonlight maid," the artists in Paris had called her. There was not a heavy note in her coloring. The blond brilliancy of some Swedish ancestor lived again in her, some "flower of northern snows," and with it the delicate American features of her mother. She was of average height, and, though slight, her body had a delicate robustness. She wore a white flannel robe loosely belted, and her hair hung in a plait to her waist.

"You don't mind my going to the table this way ? I am lazy, but we are *en famille*," she said, strolling into the hall. "Mamma hates me to do it, but I simply cannot dress for luncheon. I'm as stiff as a German cavalryman all the

afternoon and night. I must have a little freedom."

In the dining-room they found Dr. Ericsson. He drew Anne to him and gave her a bear-like hug.

"Is this your *début* as a family man?" she asked.

"No, my second appearance. I'm getting used to the lime-light. I met David Temple coming up town last night and prevailed on him to dine with us."

"What a charming man he is!" exclaimed Mrs. Ericsson, and from the commencement of the meal, with short intervals of rest, Anne was put through a catechism by her aunt about David Temple. Her tongue played between her lips restlessly, while David's position, money, character, and possible attachments were inquired after minutely and with an appraiser's air. When the cross-examination was finished, Anne had a feeling that David had been ticketed and put away with other ticketed matrimonial possibilities.

The pauses in this research were filled in by a recital of Olga's past and coming triumphs, what she must and must not do, who was worth her knowing and who was not.

Anne was glad to get back to the green and white room, the door closed, and only Olga there, looking at her with amused eyes.

"Look here, Anne, isn't she harrowing? Do you wonder how I stand it? There ought to be a law for the suppression of uncongenial relations. Mamma is really impossible."

She flung herself into a rocker and took one foot into the embrace of her hand. Suddenly she burst out laughing.

"Anne Garrick, you've a very expressive face! You don't envy me, although I'm a beauty and the only daughter of an adoring mother!"

She took a thin cigarette from a silver box on the table.

"Have one? You don't smoke? You don't know what a comfort it is."

“But doesn’t your mother object?” asked Anne, making herself comfortable among a heap of cushions.

“Of course. What doesn’t she object to? She doesn’t want me to eat potatoes lest they make me fat, nor to take cold baths, because they make me blue. She rubs my nose hard every night, because one little pink vein — see it? — shows. She almost cries when I do my hair high, and takes to her bed if I insist on more than one cup of coffee. I’m not allowed to spend a penny as I please, nor to have an original idea about a gown or hat. In fact, I’m my mother’s stock in hand, which she is always polishing, preserving, eying. It’s very trying. Shall I tell you how I manage to endure this continual censorship mixed with servile worship — for mamma does adore me. A pioneer never regarded a finished cabin, every stick of which had been laid by his own hands, with more satisfaction than she does me. She does not seem to give papa any share in my being at all.”

“I think I know what your tactics are,” said Anne, scrutinizing her good-humoredly. “You’re very soft and white. You seem to move in an atmosphere of amiability, but I have not forgotten your early propensity for sticking pins nor the educated way your little nails could scratch. You could scratch still, Olga, if that were necessary, but you have found a surer means of gaining your way.”

“You’ve hit it. What’s the use of continual dispute? Why worry this one little life out of yourself? You want your own way — take it. Be attentive to all the rules laid down for your conduct, then ignore them and smile. When you’re found out and reproaches are showered on you, think of something else or go to sleep.”

She lighted another cigarette with a ruminative expression and clasped her hands behind her head. The look in her eyes was like that of a mild baby trying to diagnose a sunbeam.

“Really, you know, if mamma would

only rest her tired little body and head and leave me to myself she'd be very wise. She has nothing to fear from me. I know what's expected of me. We're poor; worse, we're in debt. She lives in perpetual dread of my marrying a poor man. Could anything be more absurd? Nothing in the world will ever be as dear to me as my personal comfort. For a girl to go into business life as you have done, making her own way, working, struggling, is beyond my understanding. Some one must always support me, Anne, and support me well."

"I wonder you came back to America without a title, or at least a fortune."

"I could have married money several times, and a lot of it," said Olga, "but unfortunately I distinctly disliked the men. It wouldn't do to marry a man you couldn't for the life of you be civil to. Would it?"

"Oh, I don't know! Aren't you oversensitive?"

The laughter in Anne's tone did not

disturb Olga. She pursed out her lips and nodded.

“I almost caught a title too. This is the way I missed it: for one thing, mamma’s eagerness frightened him. I’m sure he could see her shake as soon as he appeared. I’m sure he saw her nudge me. But that wouldn’t have seriously mattered if he hadn’t found me out.”

Her lips curled in a one-sided smile.

“I can laugh now, but really it was provoking at the time. Val—dear thing he was!—hated the least touch of unconventionality in a woman, and smoking he considered only a little better than swearing. By the way, I’m telling you the truth about myself, Anne. It’s such a relief to tell it. I never do except to relatives. With men it’s impossible not to pose; they expect so much. Well, my dear, I posed for Val for six long, weary months. I played the little lamb, always with a bit of needlework, practising the Madonna gaze, taking only one glass of champagne at dinners

and declining cigarettes with a shy, reproachful glance. He used to tell me I was his ideal, that it seemed profane to love me, that nature knew what she was about when she fashioned me like an angel, etc. One day he walked into Morley's where I was having my portrait done, and found me with Mrs. Sutton Vane, a little monkey of a woman with a fast manner, and whom he particularly detested. We had a bet on as to which could blow the roundest rings of smoke. I, his Madonna, his angel, his snow-flower, won, while he, unseen by me, watched. Sudden business called him away next day, business so absorbing he never came back. Mamma has sat up nights with her finger to her forehead wondering why. I am all blank amazement when the subject is broached. And here endeth the romance of Lord Valentine Dunwearthy. It went up in smoke."

"You weren't a bit in love with him?"

"In love? No. I never loved anything but this. Listen!"

She went to the mirror and looked into it steadily for a moment, then turned to Anne, her whole expression changed. The laziness of glance vanished. She flung up her head and laughed joyously. To Anne's amazement the lines from "The Merchant of Venice" where Portia decides to masquerade as a man, left her lips at first tenderly, with half-hidden laughter, as a school-girl confides a secret, then with assurance, a pretty swagger, delighted anticipation.

Anne listened in wonder. The room seemed to fade, the clatter from the street became unreal, and it was not Olga who stood before her. It was Portia glittering in queenliness and coquetry, the perfume of an Italian garden coming in with the sunset, a minstrel lounging near her, swords distantly clanking as waiting gallants moved. Her voice had power and sweetness. Her awakened face sparkled changefully. She seemed possessed of a soul with wings struggling to be free.

When the last word was spoken she sank down by Anne's side and seized her hand.

"You liked it? I see you did."

"Oh, where have you had the chance" —

"Didn't you know they went wild in London society over my Constance in 'The Love Chase'? I played it at a dozen houses for various charities. Oh, the stage! That would make poverty endurable. The life calls me, Anne. I know its disadvantages, — no one better, — but it's a rare lot when you feel your fitness for it. I'll never do more than dabble with it for amusement, but if I could — if I'd been free to do as I pleased — the world would have heard of me. Here's mamma," she broke off, the light leaving her face. "She's coming with hot milk to give me a face-bath. By the way, she loathes acting, even my amateur work, but I've already made arrangements with Mrs. Oswald Morse to do Kate Hardcastle at Tuxedo for the Work-

ing Girls' Library Fund. She'd have palpitation of the heart if she knew it. I'll tell her the day before."

Anne left her in her mother's hands, over a basin of steaming milk. The meeting had left a unique and emphatic impression.

"A woman with a thistledown conscience, a woman to pick the plums from life with soft, business-like fingers and an indifferent air, five feet five of radiant selfishness, — that's my cousin Olga," she thought as she went down the street; "but I like her."

Chapter XI

OLGA appeared as Kate Hardcastle at Tuxedo, and the town, or that part of it circling in carefully barred orbit, talked of her. The papers seized on her as something new, and printed pictures of her as a beauty, libellous things in which she looked dropsical or murderous or only harmlessly mad. Mrs. Ericsson kept the reporters well informed, fumed over the newspaper abortions of her darling, went with her everywhere, to noon breakfasts, to dances ending at dawn, and in asides took pills to stay her heart.

Every one knew that Smedley Joyce, who had met Olga in London, had been her sponsor in society. In his sister's box at the opera she had made her first appearance in New York. He had managed invitations for her,

given a luncheon in her honor, and in his rooms on Fifth avenue, at a tea where a rajah in a marvellous turban winked his brilliant eyes, David Temple saw her again.

There are some men one cannot disassociate from the names upon their visiting cards. Smedley Joyce was one of these. Smedley, even to his intimates, seemed an impertinence, and Mr. Joyce commonplace. He was his full name, from the glittering apex of his bald crown to the toe of his equally glittering boot. If he could, he would have been lighter, younger, and with the lungs of a football half-back, but just as he was people deferred to him. Hopelessly devoted to a single life, his cult, however, was feminine beauty, and the woman he admired became the fashion. The personality of Smedley Joyce pervaded New York. He was a permanent fad; his vogue was unquestioned, like the Thanksgiving turkey and the horse-show.

In the fragrance and dusk of his

beautiful rooms he seized David's hand in greeting and gave it the fashionable upward jerk.

"Ah, you did get up to see us, you dreadfully busy man! You'd make us forget you if that were possible." And David found himself passed on to make room for the next comer.

He declined tea from the matrons receiving, and kept near the door. He had come in only for a few moments to see the rajah and talk with him. As he stood there, his big shoulders and keen face showing clearly above those surrounding him, he looked across the whispering, constantly changing crowd for the famous Hindoo.

Close by the big, yawning leaves of palms screening the zither-players he saw him. The lean brown profile with the huge crimson turban above was bending over some one. It was Olga. When the crowd parted David saw her plainly.

She was on a low seat beside a pink lamp, her mother, now chatting at a

little distance, having early seen the advantage of the rosy light. She was in velvet and furs, her lips under a delicate veil lazily smiling. A hat with a brim, and a big one, shadowed her eyes and gave them deeper mystery. Her pose was regal, gentle. The upward glances given to the rajah were lazy, provoking. Her delicate lips were humid with a childish sensuousness.

No wonder David and a dozen other men who watched her came to the same decision — she was beautiful, loving, gentle, true. She seemed the sort of woman men so frequently choose as a wife and never as a comrade: a helpless, fascinating, fastidious creature, whose eyes express the words: “Tell me, dear, just what to do. You know so much better than I;” not a woman of original opinions on anything under the sun; as conventional in thought as in the way she wore her hair; not tailor-made, independent, or athletic; one whose gowns were always marvels to men’s eyes, fragrant mysteries of lace

and ribbons; a woman to love ease and cushions and never remember an address; to coo to a baby, crave needlework, and dabble in charity, — altogether a seductive contrast to the restless spirit of a man's business life.

Her physical radiance came upon David for the second time with the power of a summons. He had frequently thought of her since the previous meeting. No one who once saw Olga ever quite forgot her. Side by side with the fancy of what Elaine might have been, her lovely face, rare in type, took its place.

He made his way to her and she gave him her hand, sinking back in a lazy attitude. The rajah was forgotten by him, and they talked of many things, of trifles mostly, but Olga had a way of making light talk entrancing. Her speech was pretty, and her laziness wrapped a listener with a sense of magnetic quiet.

Growing more serious, she questioned David about the "Citizen," of Anne's

position in the office, and spoke in an attractively feminine way of the mystery attending the making of a newspaper.

“How can Anne do it?” she said, smoothing her muff, her trustful eyes lifted to his. “Oh, I suppose I’m stupid, helpless, but I shouldn’t like such a life of tension and rush; always among the wheels — that’s how it seems to me. I’m afraid I’d be like a silly butterfly caught in a machine.”

“Anne’s desires are different from yours,” said David, and the perfume of the violets under her chin lightened his heart as if the shade of spring had passed him. He looked at her almost tenderly. “Yours are better.”

“Think so?”

“Better for a woman,” he said softly. “I think so, but perhaps I’m intolerant; perhaps I’m old-fashioned. I admire Anne, and I like her more than I can say. I like many women who hold her ambitious views, but they seem to me to gain brilliancy and self-reliance

at the sacrifice of a quality that is beautiful and indefinable, like a mist or a perfume."

"And you don't despise a woman who likes needlework?" asked Olga, as if confessing to one of her pet diversions; "who doesn't belong to a woman's club; who cries over a novel, and maybe not one of the best?"

"God forbid!" said David vehemently. "Soon she'll be found only among obsolete classifications. I, for one, intend to extol her before she quite disappears."

"Dear me!" she said, with low laughter. "I almost feel the pin through me now, as I repose in a glass case labelled in black and white, 'Rare specimen of woman belonging to the remote era, when she did nothing but try to be happy and was glad of it.'"

She leaned toward David as she spoke, and some one brushing past her to greet a friend forced her closer, so for a second her shoulder pressed his, her lips were an inch away, her warm,

startled breath swept his throat. It was but a second's nearness, yet his heart gave a throb of almost savage joy. In a flash her beauty became a temptation, a passionate happiness filled him, a breeze seemed to sweep along his nerves, and he knew why an unexplained joy had come to him with the first sight of this woman's face.

With her arrival his senses had struggled to awaken as at a call. Now there was no resisting the feeling. It was a quick, complete fascination. Conscious of it, he grew silent and looked at Olga with new vision.

He felt how apart from all others is the moment when a man first faces the question placed before him by his own consciousness, "Is this the woman I am to love?" It may be he awakens to the truth slowly after she has passed through the changes from stranger to nearest friend. Or one look into an unfamiliar face may blur all save the pursuing newness of that one truth. The moment is the same — over-sweet,

painful, intimately dear, never to be forgotten.

There was no chance for further talk between them. Smedley Joyce bore down on Olga with a monocled stranger in tow. A moment afterward a famous singer was announced. Every one knew it was Smedley Joyce's law that the music for which he paid so much should be respected, and silence save for an occasional whisper and rustle settled upon the crowd as the singer appeared.

She was pale, with heavy-lidded, sad eyes. A white gown draped her thin form. Roses flamed in her girdle. Her contralto voice was strange, unearthly, as she sang in a whisper of the heart-wrung damozel who watched from Heaven. She sang of love with death closely following. Her fingers moved slowly; she seemed talking to the keys:

“ ‘ I wish that he were come to me —
For he will come,’ she said.

‘ Have I not prayed in Heaven? On earth,

Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength,
And shall I be afraid ?

“ ‘ There will I ask of Christ the Lord
This much for him and me —
Only to live as once on earth,
With love ; only to be,
As then awhile, forever now
Together, I and he.’ ”

Music had never moved David Temple like that strange song. It saddened his heart, while his brain was ravished with a sense of its beauty. It gave to the new passion thrilling him an ideality which it did not possess.

He looked at Olga, hoping for one glance, but she was sitting with her head turned away, her eyes on the singer, waiting for the next song. David wanted to hear no more. He wished to keep the memory of that cry of human need, holding an echo as if caught in the far spaces of Heaven,—to knit it with the revelation of the hour.

Outside he found the dusk and the icy air. There was a medley of cold colors in the sky, the solemn night was near,

the avenue veiled in gray. He hurried on, feeling a new happiness tempered by the pain of uncertainty. Questions troubled him. Was this really love? Was his hand upon the string from which so many marvellous strains and pitiful discords had been struck?

He had always calmly and remotely contemplated the rounding of his life with a great love, but something in him had heretofore disdained sentiment. At its best it had seemed a majestic weakness, commonly only a ridiculous thing. He had known perfect friendship, but the love he had seen make fools of the wise, turn the flow of a life completely out of its course, had seemed as removed from him as insanity — until to-night.

He still felt the touch of Olga's body, the violet's perfume no sweeter than her breath.

“ Only to live as once on earth,
With love . . . ”

“ As once on earth ! ” There was rapturous memory of a joy he had never

known in those words. Their burden of passionate melody went with him like the voice of conscience. He saw only Olga's inviting eyes.

Chapter XII

DAVID loitered over his after-dinner coffee. Though expected at the office, a disinclination to enter the world of prose and machinery mastered him. He was in a relaxed and fanciful mood. He sat by the club window, conscious of the shadows flitting under the lamps, listening to the street sounds. He talked with those about him on social happenings and politics, but always, no matter what was said, felt a fine disregard of it all, because the glamour of the afternoon was with him still and his deeper thought was of that alone.

“I’d love to hear Anne sing a ballad to-night,” he thought, as he went down the steps, a cigar between his lips. “I wonder if she’s at home. She can’t be off with Donald anywhere, for he wasn’t

in town to-day. I'll see if she's in, at any rate. The walk down the lower part of the avenue and across Washington square will be glorious on a night like this."

David was in a mood when a man is his own historian, and reads the facts of a life with pleasure or a sense of failure according to the truth in that intimate, unpublished record. He saw none of the passers-by, was only half conscious of the frost and the gas-lit streets. He was regarding his years from boyhood, and measuring the completeness of his present by his use of opportunities.

It was a comfortable revery. He had nothing to regret. The death of his father had been his only grief, soon lived down in the fulness of ambition and independent wealth. No shadow lurked in his past. He had experimented with "the world, the flesh, and the devil," but had formed no ignoble ties. He had splendid health, invincible will, limitless desire for success in whatever he touched, clean years be-

hind him, a shadowless future. Suppose he married? A picture rose before him as inviting in its way as the others of the group. Why not? A woman, gentle, beautiful, sympathetic, reflecting him, sharing his life, children in his home, their future to be laid and finished when his own life was practically over.

His heart glowed; a spirit singing of triumph went with him.

Very soon — for he walked quickly — he had crossed the almost empty square to the street where Anne lived. Her sympathy meant much to him since he wished urgently for her to-night, as if she would divine the power of the new dream possessing him and all his secret thoughts. He might lead her on to talk to him about Olga.

As he went toward the house his eyes were fastened on her windows. He was not aware that a man had come down the garden path, and having opened the gate stood watching him. But when his eyes became accustomed to

the shadow he saw Donald's face under the low-drawn hat. It was almost unfamiliar, haggard, of a sick pallor, the old curse with a new shame upon it.

David looked at him in silence. The leniency of secret brotherhood between them had lately influenced his inward attitude toward Donald, and there was an elder brother's scrutiny and impatience in the look he fixed upon him.

"When I sent for you this morning, Donald, I heard you hadn't been home for three days," he said gravely. "I thought you'd gone to the lightship to make the pictures for Arnold's story, though next week would have done for that. Did you go?"

Donald drew back into the path, the light of the street-lamp upon him. He seemed to age. He lifted his hands and let them fall heavily.

"No, I didn't. I meant to go. I — Well, you see how it's been with me," he said bluntly.

"You've been drinking again."

“ You’ve hit it. Going at the devil’s pace.”

It was the apathetic admission of one vanquished.

David had always thought of him with impatience as one deliberately bad, seeking the congenial though it meant wreckage, and he had mentally washed his hands of him long ago. Just because he was a brother and dependent he had retained him on the “ Citizen ” despite his lapses, paying him for what work he handed in, never questioning him, letting him entirely alone. He had always viewed two things as hopeless — a woman with a hobby, a man with a vice. There was no lasting virtue in reformation. He had seen so many failures, even when men and women hungered for the good they were not strong enough to grasp. And now Donald — the old story! It was a pity. The years behind him were his future temptation. There is shock in a fall, but a step to familiar conditions is easy enough.

He fingered his cigar uneasily, almost at a loss for words.

“I’m sorry you were weak, Donald,” and the words, despite his effort, had a flat, stereotyped ring, “but you mustn’t fancy it’s hopeless. You must just begin the battle over again.”

Donald’s eyes fell, a faint smile played over his face.

“So she said,” and he looked up shrinkingly at Anne’s window. “She can’t save me; no one can except myself. I must save myself. That’s what she said when she sent me away to-night—I must save myself. I tried before—I was so sure—so sure—so happy. But when temptation got to a climax it was like a paper house trying to get the better of a flame. You wouldn’t bet on the paper house, would you?” he said sharply.

“Get away from the flame.”

“Suppose you carry it with you night and day, night and day, here, here, here?” he called out, his hand tight upon his breast.

His expression changed to stolid gloom, and he looked past David.

“Only for her I’d give it all up and go to the devil without a regret. I didn’t mind so much before I knew her. Now when I know what a poor thing I am, why can’t I forget that she cares what happens to me, go away, quench this damnable torture by satisfying it — and die, the sooner the better? Why can’t I do it?” and his voice rose and quivered, but sank again to a whisper. “I can’t. I can’t. No one else cares a hang what becomes of me, but as long as she cares I’ve got to try in spite of myself. I’ve got to try, and suffer, and deserve a little her belief in me.”

He laid his arm along the icy bars and let his head fall upon it. David thought of his late self-congratulation, the contented review of his life, and the sight of this tormented soul was terrible.

“Look here, Donald, this is all nonsense. You mustn’t take this lapse so seriously. You must forget it and start anew,” and he pulled at the

bent shoulder, his tone encouraging. "That's what you must do. And you mustn't think no one cares but Anne," he added softly, his hand tightening where it lay. "I care very much."

"You?"

Donald lifted his head and looked steadily at David.

"Yes, I. Don't forget that. No one was more glad than I when you started in to make something of yourself. I pity you now. By and by I want to be proud of you. Don't say you have no friend but Anne Garrick. I hope you'll deserve her good opinion. But remember I count on you, too. I will do anything in the world to help you. Don't you believe it?"

He held out his hand. Donald looked at it, but did not stir. There was almost irresistible magnetism in David's kindling eyes, and Donald had always stealthily loved him. But he could not touch the proffered hand, much as he longed to. It would be renouncing too sweet a revenge.

“Won’t you take my hand?”

“No,” he said insolently. “What have you ever been to me that I should flatter this poetic impulse of yours — this impulse now — that means nothing?”

Chagrin and uneasiness seized David; his hand fell.

“I’m sincere. What do you mean?”

“You care what becomes of me? You care for my contemptible existence? You?”

He stood erect, buttoning his coat tightly across his breast, his eyes brilliant and dry.

“You seem sceptical,” and David’s tone was uncertain in a way most unusual for him. “Believe it or not, I’m ready to help you now or at any time.”

“Oh, are you?” said Donald slowly, nodding his head. “Your generosity comes too late. This is a strange place to have this matter out between us. I never supposed I’d speak of myself to you, but I’m not myself to-night. You, too, seem to have undergone a wonder-

ful change. The words you speak are unfamiliar. Why didn't you say years ago what you've said to-night? Did you ever think of the difference between us — what love and care can make of a boy, what scorn and intolerance can make of him? There were nights when I thought I'd go mad from sheer loneliness, and you, full of your schemes and pleasures, never gave me a thought. My heart starved for sympathy, but I couldn't get near you. Don't let me think of those days before I had learned to say, 'I don't care,' and when you could have helped me. Don't let me think of them."

He brushed past David and pulled open the gate.

"Wait a minute, Donald. What you say requires an answer. Listen to me. You forget circumstances made it almost impossible for us to be friends. My father's unhappiness with your mother, his dislike of you — cruelly unjust, I admit" —

"I was his sin." And a sneer made

Donald ugly for a moment. "His eyes couldn't bear to light on me. The sight of me turned him sick, and made him nose for comfort among the Psalms telling of King David's repentance. I was his materialized sin, and he scourged me. You know that."

"Yes; but there, don't let us go into that miserable business! I'm only trying to defend myself. The injustice of those days wasn't my fault."

"And after John Temple died, was there any difference? You gave me work, but I was nothing to you. For eight years I've been busy at slow homicide, strangling whatever was good in me. You said nothing. You didn't tell me then to brace up and make something of myself. Now" — and the words were a cry of anguish — "I seem to have a malformed soul unfit for struggle. It's like entering a cripple against a giant. Once what wouldn't I have given to have felt you really cared! Think what it would have been to me! I was without a friend, as ready for evil

as a laid powder-trail is for a match. If you'd spoken then as you did to-night" — he paused, looking away from David. "You didn't. You offer your encouraging words now. They're useless, and I refuse them."

He closed the gate sharply, and David watched him down the street. There was a sick sense of guilt at his heart. For the first time he faced the truth. He saw himself wrapped in egotism, living for personal success, never thinking of the want in Donald's life. He had always known he was cold, practical, stern, apt to view the failures of life with impatience, the road to his heart a narrow one beset by roughnesses; but to realize he had been cruel too, and that the remorseful soul he had faced to-night was in some degree a result of his self-absorption, was a new and hateful fact. Even this present consideration for Donald had been selfish. His own unqualified content had made him kind, as an over-full glass must waste some of its wine.

On leaving the club he had looked forward to a cosey hour with Anne, when he might have led her to talk about her cousin; but he had been roused to something sterner, to face a delayed duty, and when he did anything he did it well.

Anne was writing when he went into the sitting-room.

"I met Donald at the gate," were his first words, and he noticed a look of anxiety pass over her face.

"Were you speaking to him?"

"Yes, we had it out. Curious, wasn't it, after all these years to know for the first time the real Donald at your garden gate?"

"Don't be hard on him," she said clearly, standing up.

An expression of defiance in her eyes added to his self-reproach. He looked at her thoughtfully.

"I must have seemed a brute to you. Sit down by me here, Anne, and help me a little. I've always been so obedient to my conscience that it has never

been a nuisance. Well, to-night it stings me like a fretful woman, and I must silence it," he said bitterly. "I'm going to do something for Donald. I've a scheme I think would save him. I'm going to help him with all my heart."

"You will?"

"With all my heart."

"Oh, yes!" she said, seizing David's hand, her love for him rushing over her. "He's done all he could to ruin his life, but you'll help him to value it now. You're so good!"

Chapter XIII

MRS. ERICSSON fluttered into the green and white room and stood before Olga. She looked like a quivering interrogation-mark.

“Why won’t you go to see Irving with the Kents? The invitation has come at the last moment, but you know they got the box unexpectedly, so you needn’t fancy you’ve been asked just to fill in.”

She surveyed Olga with pleading eyes and irritated air. Never had she seemed so purposely provoking as now, lying before the window in a steamer chair, calm, attentive, and polite.

“I’m not going, dear,” said Olga, settling herself at an angle which brought added comfort and turning the fashion magazine she had been reading face downward on her knee, “because

I'm lazy, because this dry cold makes my nose an ugly magenta" —

"You have furs" —

"Because I hate the theatre in the daytime, am sick to death of Mrs. Kent and her knobby-headed son" —

"Olga, you'll simply drive me distracted by your indifference."

"And because David Temple is coming at five o'clock."

"Oh," with a comprehensive gasp, "is he?"

"I asked him in last night."

Mrs. Ericsson dropped into a chair and folded her hands in her lap.

"Olga," she said seriously, "for the past month, ever since Smedley Joyce's tea, he has been following you about. You've encouraged him, whether for fun, as you call it, or not I don't know. But people say David Temple is not a marrying man and to have him loom up like your shadow wherever you go will hurt your chances. It certainly will."

"Think so?" and Olga drew a loose strand of hair through her fingers.

“I know it. You’re very perverse. There’s Bob Deschalles making a fool of himself over you, a man with one of the largest fortunes” —

“And a fool. I’m not exacting when millions are appended, but I draw the line at him. Don’t talk of him any more.”

She looked fully at her mother with open criticism.

“How little you understand me. If you knew anything of character, you’d have seen long ago I must be proud of the man I marry. I need not care a pin for him, but because of brains, family or personality with wealth, I must regard him as a prize and have other women envy me. D’ye see? Now who’d envy me Bob Deschalles — who under heaven?”

She gave a conclusive shrug and returned to the magazine. Her mother looked at her and sighed impatiently.

“Well, about David Temple?” she said sharply.

“And what about him? He’s coming

at five. I'm going to pour tea for him, which he'll pretend to drink. I'll see he thinks me beautiful, which I am, as well as a great many other things which I'm not."

"You know well enough what I mean, Olga. You can be so provoking. Why don't you answer me?"

"You haven't asked me anything."

"Does he mean anything?" she asked angrily.

"Yes, he means everything."

"Has he said anything?" And a look of rapacity made Mrs. Ericsson's eyes gleam.

"Not exactly."

"Then how can you tell? You only think so. You've thought so before and been mistaken."

"I feel it."

"And you'd marry him?"

"Why not? I've used my eyes to good advantage, mamma, though I haven't seemed to see much. Women have stopped running after David Temple because he's been given up as

hopeless. Suppose I win him? If any have doubted my power they'll doubt no more. Besides, he inspires a delicious sense of fear in me. As for what he is," — and she extended her hands, — "show me anything better. He's rich. The position he holds at the head of the 'Citizen,' representing its brains and money, is the nearest thing to a title to be had in this country. More than this, he's ambitious, and he'll keep advancing. He may go into politics, be the President — who knows? — and I'll make things hum at the White House." She rose and in passing her mother drew her hand teasingly down her small, worried face, flattening the nose. "How would you look, dear, between two foreign diplomats at a state dinner? Just like a pussy-cat," she laughed merrily. "And how would it like to look like a pussy-cat?"

"Don't be childish, Olga." Mrs. Ericsson rearranged her nose and stood up testily. "You've evidently made up your mind. Well, I'll be glad when

it's settled and the strain of keeping up appearances is over."

"If you only wouldn't worry," said Olga placidly.

"Not worry?" flashed Mrs. Ericsson from the doorway. "And where would you be and how would things be with you to-day if I didn't worry to find some way of making ends meet? I'll say 'Thank God' when it's ended."

"And I'll say 'Amen,'" said Olga, with more emphasis than was usual with her.

Chapter XIV

AT eight o'clock it was snowing wildly. The city was like the wraith of what it had been in the morning hours. Foot-marks were wiped out as soon as made, and the whirl of the storm filled the town with excitement.

The bell in David Temple's office was rung sharply.

"I didn't know Mr. Temple'd come back," said Pete in dismay, sliding the latest dime novel under a box.

While fastening her veil Anne listened for David's voice. His steady, unaccented tones came clearly to her. He had returned and entered his private office without passing through the editorial rooms. A moment later he came in.

"I thought you'd be gone," he said, pausing beside her. His eyes were

unusually bright, a cool color from the storm was on his cheeks. "I'm going out again in a moment and will go up town with you. I just came down to see Farley," and he crossed to the night editor's desk.

Ten minutes later they were on the streets together. The snow stung their faces, settled like a mantle over them, and in capricious skeins half hid the blinking eyes of the crowd they passed through. Shivering newsboys blew on their fingers, crouching under the stairs of the elevated road, and white-capped *tamale* men, presiding over their copper cans like magicians over a flame, sent their rolling cry from the shelter of doorways.

The trains were crowded at that hour. It was necessary for Anne to take a seat far from where David stood, and she could only see his big shoulders beyond an intervening dozen. By the time her gate came in sight after a difficult walk, the storm had reached crescendo and they were breathless.

“Come up to the fire for a moment,” said Anne.

“But you haven’t dined?”

“Hours ago. It’s almost nine. Come in. I’ve seen nothing of you for a week.”

“Just for a moment, then, if I may. Besides, I want to speak to you of Donald.”

And it was of Donald they talked, yet something in David’s tone thrilled and bewildered Anne. He had been successful in his interview with Donald Sefain, had flung the first plank across the chasm between them. But content for that did not explain the light in his face, the passionate air in his whole presence. He seemed revelling in unexpressed exultation. With a foolish stirring of the heart Anne was conscious of it, and waited.

As he talked he leaned back with eyes half closed. The pose forcibly recalled the first day she saw him, when he had tried to prevent her becoming a newspaper woman, — the flung-

back shoulder and half-closed eye, the loosened lock of hair clinging to the forehead and giving a boyish touch to his face. Then he was a stranger, treating her like a too ambitious child. Now he was David, so familiar, so well understood he was like another self, and she loved him.

There was fright in this last thought to-night. She seemed wild and strong, but chained by one invisible thread of her own making. While she listened to David she found herself endeavoring to explain to her pride the voluntary surrender of her heart to this man who did not and might never love her.

From this her thoughts drifted to the optimism in natural selection, and that it might be unreciprocated. After all, she was only following an old law. Other women had impulsively and silently loved men whose hearts had been closed to them.

She knew that David was indifferent. He permitted few people an acquaintance with his intimate self. He

sought none. Yet no man had more friends. Pete in the office, to whom from sheer unconcern he had never spoken a kind word, felt privileged in some mysterious way when commissioned to carry home a parcel for him. Donald, in spite of the untoward circumstances of their lives, loved him with all his heart. It was not strange, then, since David Temple was a man whose magnetism was a positive possession, who owned the passive supremacy which steals from the recorded lives of Napoleon and Dean Swift, that one woman should have come still nearer to him uninvited. She seemed defending her weakness before an invisible jury, and was acquitted.

“A splendid chance,” David was saying when she gave him her undivided attention again; “a chance not to be had every day. The partnership can be his for an absurdly small amount, you know, because the Englishman who is cutting it all sickened in the climate and wants to get home.

But Donald, assisted by the good business men still in the company, could make it pay. In Brazil"—

"Brazil? He'll have to go to Brazil?" she said uncertainly.

"You haven't been listening to me." And David leaned toward her. "Where do you suppose they grow coffee, Anne,—on Staten Island? Really," he said urgently, "nothing will help Donald like getting away from New York. If it's hard to cut the old associations here, it will be just as hard to form new ones there. At first he would not listen to me, would not let me lend him the necessary money. It was a struggle between us, and I assure you, Anne, I humiliated myself to him."

"Does he want to go now?"

"He wants to try — glad even to stop sketching for a while. It need only be for a few years. He will give up brain work and uncertain hours for a life demanding physical energy and systematic habits. Did I tell you," he said more softly, "he's to let me send

his *protégé*, Joe Evans, to my old nurse in Connecticut? The climate down there would finish the little chap in a wink." He started up and took a few steps up and down. "I never can forget my visit to his rooms the other night, and the sight of the sick boy there. Donald is a queer mixture of good and bad, isn't he? He's done what I never could do, been vicious as I never could be, but he's made life a heaven for one creature, urged to it by a humanity which I scarcely understand."

He stood before the fire and stared into it. There was a line between his brows, his glance was heavy, and Anne knew he was thinking of himself and what he lacked as perhaps he never had before. He sighed and moved so that his elbow rested on the mantel. When he looked down at Anne, she saw again the light as from a heart satisfied which before had puzzled her.

"Anne," he said, in a musing way, "do I seem unlike myself to-night?"

She nodded. She could not move her eyes from his.

“But do I look like a man who has come into a rare inheritance? Do I? Yes, yes,” he said quickly. “I want to tell you. You have been so much to me, I must tell you now.”

He took the chair opposite her and again leaned forward. Anne sat motionless, a heavy coldness weighting her.

“Look at me. I am in love at last, as unreasonably, as hopefully, as if I were twenty-two.”

There was a second's pause. To Anne it was the ray between aspiration and chaos, all that was possible and what could never be.

“I told Olga to-day I loved her, Anne, and she is going to marry me. You and I will be relatives soon,” he said gayly, and pressed her hand.

There was nothing to tell him that she was cold and in darkness. She remained apparently quiet while her heart seemed cloven by a sword. She said everything he expected of her, some of the phrases quite prettily, too. She even laughed while the mirth was dust

on her lip and David unreal and terrible to her.

After a long time he went away, and she sat like a dead woman, yet curiously, painfully alive to one thought: she had loved him, and he had passed her by; Olga had won her happiness. The apathy left her, and she sprang up, her eyes suddenly wild. She hated Olga and envied her bitterly, but only for a moment. Through all her pain she recognized an unquestionable fatality. The reason of her failure to draw to herself the man she loved lay somewhere at the large root of things, in darkness, beyond the knowing. Olga's success was just as inexplicable and impersonal. The bitter fact she could face and must accept, but nothing else.

Unconscious of time, she sat still until voices in the hall and a knock at the door seemed to come from a long distance. Nora, half asleep, entered with a letter. A messenger boy in the hall was rubbing his ears with his mittened hands.

Anne opened the envelope without curiosity, but the words aroused her, and pity for something besides herself passed over her face.

MY DEAR ANNE : Can you come to my place as soon as you read this? I'm afraid it's all up with poor Joe, and he keeps talking of you. Do come with the messenger. He won't live through the night. I dare not leave his side.

DONALD.

Anne looked at the clock. It was after eleven. She heard the wind shake the window in fury, she saw the snow moved like a tremendous curtain westward, and a groaning stole in from the night. The silent room became suddenly unendurable.

When she stepped from her doorway with the boy, the wind, as if recognizing her affinity by reason of the storm in her soul, welcomed her with frenzy. There was relief in bending her head against the blast, in feeling the flakes sting her face to burning life; the sense of being needed had comfort in it, and

the purpose of her errand surmounted for the time the other dull, insistent ache.

The street where Donald lived was in the heart of the business centre, and mournfully quiet. The lights in high tenements and old-fashioned lodging-houses flickered on lonely stretches of snow, traffic was muffled, and people passed as if with velvet-shod feet.

Anne dismissed the messenger at Donald's door, and entered alone. From the many small apartments came sounds of the life within. Through one open transom where tobacco-smoke curled she heard a German's voice, raised in argument, roll out, "Bismarck!" In another room a girl was laughing unrestrainedly. Farther away the reiterations of a banjo were like punctuations on the silence.

The meaning of her presence there struck Anne afresh and sharply. One room of this big house was silent, set apart, although no signet-mark of blood showed on the door. Joe, the wan

picker-boy, had become a personage with all preparations made for a mysterious and final journey, and she had come to bid him an impressive farewell. At the head of the stairs she paused. A dread of the room beyond and the scene to follow came upon her, and she half turned away.

But Mrs. Mulligan came down the hall, and under the unsheltered gaslight Anne saw the resigned sorrow of the old on her face.

“It’s ye, acushla,” she said, with a long sigh. “Well, poor Joe’s gone.”

She opened the door, showing the dim room, Donald at the window, his head bowed, and Joe’s spent body outlined on the bed in majestic and eternal quiet.

Donald turned and came quickly to Anne’s side. He held her hand in silence for a moment.

“I suppose I shouldn’t have asked you to come,” he said, lifting the snowy cloak from her shoulders, “but Joe wanted you. Only a few moments after the messenger had gone, he died.”

There was a defiant, unhappy smile on his lips. "His reprieve was short-lived, wasn't it? And I had meant to make him happy. I was not permitted, you see. Perhaps I was not fit."

"Don't — don't — Donald" — And Anne, unable to say more, sat down beside the bed.

The room was silent. Mrs. Mulligan had stopped the clock, and the hands pointed to the last moment of Joe's life. The old woman who had so sincerely loved the waif drew the cloth to the sharp chin and stood like a figure of Fate, drearily nodding. The boy's face wore the look of fixed appeal with which the dead can disarm even hate.

"A wild night to die!" sighed Mrs. Mulligan, striking her palms softly together. "He was a small gossoon to go so far alone. Poor Joe! Ye'll never hould me yarn for me again. I'll miss ye, 'cushla, sore I'll miss ye." Breaking into sobs, she went out.

"Anne, I want to speak to you."

The words were a breath and spoken

over her shoulder. Anne half turned, when Donald's hand was laid upon her arm.

"No," he said quickly, "don't look at me. Let me say what I must here."

His dark, agonized face was bent above her as she sat in a waiting attitude, her eyes on the silent clock. A lock of hair lay on her shoulder, and Donald's fingers touched it stealthily during a moment's pause.

"How can I say what I want to?" he asked helplessly. "But I needn't say all. You know what you've been to me. Anne, this room holds all my worse than useless life has known—you and what was Joe. His eyes are forever closed, the first whose worship I felt I deserved. You don't know what that meant to me. His look was like a waiting pardon, no matter what my sins."

She tried to lift her hand and speak, but he pressed it back, still avoiding her gaze.

"What I was to Joe," he said, "you've

been to me — that and more. The bond between us makes me know that in some dear sense I belong to you — that you will be made glad or sad by what I may become. Well, far away from you in a land where I shall be alone and lonely I'm going to work, thinking of you. After to-night I may not see you again for years. When I am fit I'll come back, and I may say to you then, Anne, what now I must only whisper from shadow and without a hope. I love you. You are more to me than creed or church or prayers, for you've done what those couldn't. And I love you for yourself, apart from this altogether. I love you, Anne, I love you."

His voice faltered. Anne rose and faced him. It seemed as if chords in her soul had been struck harshly that night, but in some insolvable way a wondrous harmony had resulted. The yearning sentiment which Donald had always inspired in her rose to something more. In being hope, desire, and

strength to him there was a responsibility of joy and pain she could not wholly accept, yet would not repulse. She gave him her hands, her mouth quivering like a child's. Her eyes were all tenderness and confidence.

"I don't deserve a love like this," she said seriously. "How little I deserve it! But I'll remember, Donald."

She sighed and looked at him intently.

"I'll remember all you've said." But when his eyes grew more wistful she looked away.

It was after two o'clock when Donald left her at her door and said good-by. She watched him down the street, and saw him stand once in the drifting snow and look back.

She went slowly up the stairs and into the sitting-room, where the fire had been kept bright. A mocking presence seemed to greet her. Just within the door she leaned against the wall. There was the snow-padded window, the curtain drawn back as her hand had placed

it. By the fire was the chair in which David Temple had sat. She saw the book on which her elbow had rested as she had listened to him.

In the shock of Joe's death and Donald's unexpected words the memory of the bitter hour spent there had been crowded back. Now it started into full life, and apprehensive disgust of the days to come nullified other feeling within her.

“Oh, to forget, to forget, to forget!”

She flung off cloak and hat and sat down at her desk before the window. Her lips were set and seemed to have been brushed with ashes. Her eyes were shut beneath frowning brows. She would forget — she must. She could not bear the days to come unless she did forget.

Before her lay the portfolio holding the pages of her neglected novel. Scarcely knowing what she did, she opened it and laid her hands upon the leaves. A phrase here and there caught her eyes, the names of the characters

she had created. A deeper attraction for the work awoke in her; desire for sleep departed, and she felt alive to her finger-tips.

She bent over the pages, and her pen went haltingly at first, but by degrees a new desire dominated her, and nothing but the thought and the word born of the thought were real to her. All else had failed. This power in herself was strong and true. Though all other delights forsook her, this never would.

Her cheek was gray, and the light had gone from her eyes, whose lashes were stiffened with tears. But she was no longer unhappy. The drifting mists of that strange dawn fled under the full sunlight and found her still writing.

Chapter XV

SEVEN months had passed since David's marriage in April.

They had gone by for Anne in a vague, uncounted way, not in days, but in dreams, during which only the mental half of her had seemed to live, and the word "work" had been her shibboleth.

Her finished novel, smelling of printer's ink, lay on her knees. In an absent way she fondled it, ruffled the pages against her cheek, and kissed it. She had begun it when her heart was bleeding, had given herself to it during hours when she should have slept, had walked with it as with a spirit, had known no other love nor friend during those seven months.

And it had repaid her with comfort, encouragement, and the assurance of ideals grasped. She held it as a mother

her child, and felt an exquisite peace. No one in all the world ever could know her like that little book.

The firelit room was restful. Her thoughts strayed back to forbidden scenes. She could think of them to-day without the old sickening sense of loss, when the future had seemed to hold no force sufficient to wipe out or rebuild. She had learned to spell the meaning of life ; it was part of life which had crushed her to tears, the mixed human life, made up of sorrows, affronts, defeats, just such philosophy as she comforted herself with now, and the joy which might sometime be hers.

For seven months she had not seen David Temple. He had taken Olga through the lands he had dreamed of visiting since his boyhood. An impetuous, characteristic scrawl had occasionally come from Olga, chiefly at the close of letters from David in which he had rambled on in his old, half-teasing, brilliant style, treating her with the same fascinating *camaraderie*

which had once quickened her foolish heart into a surrender he had not desired. From lands whose postmarks had suggested visions of strange, fantastic beauty these letters had drifted like echoes of brilliant rhapsodies across the semi-tones of her life.

The first fortnight of the honeymoon had been spent at Ponto del Gado in the Azores, a rare land of sea-encircled silence, the camellias thickly fallen from the trees making a carpet like perfumed snow for the earth. They lived in a cream-colored villa with coral-pink shutters ; it was built on a green hill plateau and approached by a stairway hewn out of lava from some early volcanic torrent; the blue reaches of the Atlantic swept to the blue horizon line on every side, until the world seemed domed and steeped in azure.

From the heights of Mustapha Supérieur outside Algiers, they had watched the fuchsia-pink of fleeting spring dusks die on the Mediterranean, and

had walked under the moon in the cemetery of a mosque a thousand years old.

They had lived in a semi-ruined palace in Venice, the street beneath their windows a radiant river holding the stars and moon and the wavering shadows of gondoliers whose oars dipped to music near and far away ; they had watched a bull-fight in Seville ; played at Monte Carlo ; and, drifting among the narrow fjords, had felt the weird beauty of the midnight sun in Norway. The past two months had found them in England, guests at several country houses. Soon they were coming home.

Anne sat back and clasped her hands behind her head. On the desk beside her lay three letters : one offered her the assistant editor's chair on a new weekly paper ; one ready for the post was her acceptance ; the other was to David and contained her resignation. In withdrawing from the "Citizen," her intimate attitude to David would be

changed : they would meet seldom. This was all she desired now.

The ship which carried David and Olga, among some other hundreds of souls, arrived in New York on a misty November afternoon.

Dr. Ericsson was at the wharf to meet them. They were to dine that night *en famille* at the old house in Waverly place.

“Anne can’t be with us,” said the old man regretfully as the carriage took them up Broadway. “Her old home in the country is without a tenant at present, and she’s taking a rest there. She’s been working too hard, too steadily, night and day.”

“She’s a fool,” said Olga from her corner, where she sat wrapped in furs to the nose. “She’ll be used up in five years.”

David felt his heart grow warm at the mention of Anne’s name. The old life would be delightful again. He had lost many ideals during the long honeymoon, and now longed for work,

the rush of the "Citizen's" rooms, where discussions on life's verities shot to and fro like a weaver's shuttle. He longed for a sight of Anne at her corner desk, with bent profile or cheek resting in her hand. His marriage should not alter the friendship which had been in its way more satisfying, as it surely was rarer, than love. A comrade of a pretty, clever woman was the best gift a man could have in life. And he knew Anne would be glad to have him back. She must have missed him, for she chose few friends, and none had been to her like him.

"Tell me about Anne," he said eagerly, while he gazed with pleasure at the familiar street scenes framed in the carriage windows. "She's well, isn't she?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Dr. Ericsson, with a bright smile. "Why shouldn't she be? If, as they say, a woman thrives on admiration, she's had quite enough to turn that dark-tressed head of hers. You know about her book?"

“No. Is it finished? You don’t mean she’s had her book published? She did not write that bit of news. I call it sly of her.”

“Perhaps she doubted its merit, its reception. She doubts no longer. There are plenty of books chucked at the public, but seldom one like hers. Everybody is recommending it to everybody else.”

“This is great news. Do you hear, Olga?”

But Olga was asleep.

“Morgan did a good thing for himself when he got her for the ‘Planet,’ didn’t he?” asked Dr. Ericsson. “You’ll miss her on the ‘Citizen.’”

“What do you mean?” asked David. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“But you knew Anne was no longer with the ‘Citizen.’”

“No, I didn’t.”

“She wrote you ten days — two weeks ago.”

“I didn’t get the letter, then.” And

David sat back, making no effort to hide his disappointment.

After learning the particulars he was silent. He could not realize that Anne was gone, and with her to a great extent the influence in his life he desired and loved in the purest sense. He longed to be with her again that night. There was much he wanted to talk to her about. He wanted to see her come toward him and welcome him. He wanted to hear her bright account of the multitude of incidents which had happened during the months he had been away. She had a pretty trick when talking of bringing her fist down upon her knee in the most gentle way, that had always reminded him of a flower striking its head against a wall, — he wanted to see that, and her uplifted face, and to hear her quick laugh. He had felt a similar, but less intricate, craving for a chum at school after the division of the holidays.

The feeling strengthened during the night, and long after Olga had gone to

her first land sleep on a bed that didn't wobble he found himself treading the stairs leading to the "Citizen" offices. It was close upon midnight. He had not been expected until morning, and his coming made a sensation. In a twinkling he was in the midst of the old life, finding at that unexpected moment a score of questions to decide and the usual turmoil singing in the air. He flung himself into the work, his disappointment about Anne almost forgotten in the earnestness of the hour.

But in the early morning, when with the wet first copy of the paper in his hand he stood before her deserted desk, a sense of loss crept coldly over him. Would he never see her sitting there again?

Chapter XVI

THE old Temple mansion on lower Fifth avenue seemed to wink surprise from its windows at the changes which had taken place within its walls for months before and weeks after its master's return. Staircases had been reversed, rooms halved or multiplied, windows made over, and the furniture of many generations removed to make room for the treasures Olga had brought with her from Europe.

When completed at Christmas-time, it was as beautiful as rare rugs, china, and genuine antiquities could make it.

Since her earliest memory Olga had never been given a penny to spend without the accompaniment of a caution to use it to the best advantage, as there were few to follow. Later her insatiable need of luxuries beyond her

reach had been gratified by the mounting up of bills, but the unpleasantness of debt had followed and eaten half the pleasure. As David Temple's wife she found herself for the first time able to command money, and she spent it. Luxuries became needs, fashionable rivalries troubled her, and she lay awake devising competitive extravagances. It was her ambition to be not only the beauty of her set, but a famous beauty and the most talked-of woman of her time. Celebrated belles of the past had found a place in history, either by their splendid gallantries, wit, or by the originality of their caprices.

The age she lived in did not view the first with the palliative shrug belonging to the days of Charles II. and Louis XIV.; the second was beyond her; but a startling outlay of money by a beauty of good position could create a heroine in this money-worshipping time.

"You are splendid," Smedley Joyce

said to her, surveying her with monocle held up. "You need splendor. You're the very one to set the pace in society. We have no social successes here worth mentioning, unless I except myself. But you can become leader and attract rivals. That sort of thing gives *verve*, you know. The day will come when American society will not be the vapid thing it is now, and even self-complacent, non-travelled France will at least have heard our names. You are beautiful, young, rich, and a capital actress. Use your gifts well, startle by your originalities, make a feature of the drama in the drawing-room, spend all the money you can command in a way that will create notice, — do these things and you will be a success."

Olga laid the lesson to heart. Her country-house on the Sound, purchased from a fallen millionaire, soon outdid in cost and display her town-house. Her next craze was for horses, and she had stables built with stalls of oak and

trimmings of copper. A *chic* Marie Antoinette boudoir on the upper floor was the most bizarre touch, and a small musicale given there attracted the reporters of society gossip.

She produced at her own house an old comedy of sufficient frankness to create a sensation among her familiars and make the curious of humbler status ache for a sight of her. She made sensational hits by unique methods of bestowing charity. She became one of the most talked-of women in New York.

David lived with her, watched her. Every day he learned something new of the shallow, self-centred nature masked by a loveliness which despite his reasoning subdued him still. He could have checked her extravagance, controlled her. He preferred to do neither, for he knew that in becoming her master her fear of him would have to be the weapon in his hand, her secret hate the result.

His fortune was a splendid one. The

actual money spent, great though it was, troubled him little, but Olga's insensate desire for spending helped to reveal her to him. Her vanity, which she took no pains to hide, was a continual affront.

They never quarrelled, seldom disagreed. Olga was affectionate, soft, gentle, as of old. No man could be insensible to her charm. But David divined how quickly the amiable smile would have changed to stolid dislike had her whims been interfered with. She went her own way serenely, no soul in her life, none in her kiss, loving nothing in the world save her own white and perfect body.

David was conscious of these truths, yet chose not to see them too clearly. He remained wilfully dull-sighted. He did not dare to think, decide, accept. Why fight the irremediable? Why plunge his mind in shadows? Why face the fact that in the most serious relation of life he had committed an amazing piece of folly? Rather let him accept Olga as she was, not the

woman of his impassioned fancy. Let him demand only what she could give, and learn to subdue his hunger for an existence she could not be part of nor understand. Let him refrain from fathoming the muddy shallows of her soul, by degrees need her less, and draw around himself the comfort of an irresistible indifference. Better so for the peace of his life.

But sometimes a memory would trouble David Temple and leave his heart sad. He would think of the day he had heard the pale singer whisper of the damozel who watched from heaven for her lover, and he would remember how in that moment his heart had grown large with joy as he looked at Olga's face. It had really been but the stir of the upper waves of passion, and he had fancied the sea-depths troubled, but from that moment's ache and rapture he had known what love might be in a life when it stayed.

Chapter XVII

MY DEAR DONALD: You want me to tell you just where I am and how I look whenever I write to you — a habit, by the way, which may make me very conceited.

Well, then, it is a wet Sunday, but soft and hazy as wet June days are. The windows are open and the big tree outside drips a burden of rain-tears. The sky is all mist, with the blue only a little way beyond. I have had a lazy morning, and now after a cold plunge and a cup of tea I am sitting in a white morning-gown and my hair hangs down my back in a long plait. Are these details satisfactory? I have a big bunch of roses in the copper bowl you gave me, and the bell of the French church is calling the people to worship. Oh, it's good to be at peace with everything created! Hours like this are the heaven of my week. Woman is a luxurious animal, and when she spends six days with discipline and routine as I do, she is very apt to go to pieces on the seventh. Behold me, then, to-day, degenerate, not going to church, not improving my mind, not in a stiff collar, and guiltless of a hairpin.

The new "Planet" gets on famously. I have a little room and a big desk all to myself. Proof-readers and others "confer" with me. Think of it! I feel quite a personage, Donald, but I think my expression is not changed in consequence. I go to the office every day and leave at about three. Generally I write on my new book until dinner. Of course this programme is frequently changed. I go out a good deal, and have met lots of people who simply suggest "copy" with every turn of the head, created for no other purpose, I'm sure, than to have me write about them. Yes, I am still a "student of life." Will you never stop teasing me about that phrase? How often I think of the queer sights we saw together when you were directing my instruction! Didn't we enjoy them, Donald, that old Russian exile, — I can hear his violin now, — the first time I saw the "Citizen's" presses going like mad, the nook in the degenerate back street where we had tea and speculated about Paris?

You see what your command to talk about myself has done. I have talked of nothing else. Did you get the papers I sent about the dinner and cotillion at Olga's? I can't tell you how beautiful she looked. Why, by the way, do you think David isn't happy? Why shouldn't he be? He has married the woman he loves, and is able to surround her with the luxury she requires to be content. Perhaps he would prefer not to be the

husband of a society beauty on whom the lens is always fixed. In fact, I know Olga's display must jar upon him. But he is wise enough to know that no life holds all. If he loves her, the rest is mere detail. If he doesn't — well, I don't know, Donald. David is a man to hide well what he wishes to hide, and have an inner life without a hint betraying it. They act in society as do all people with a proper idea of form — pay not the slightest attention to each other. Let us hope the tone of David's letter to you was only the result of a passing mood.

And now to talk of yourself. I hope you are well and feel more happy now on that sleepy plantation. I feel so glad when you write with courage. Try not to be homesick. The sketches you sent are beautiful, and you are right to keep up your sketching.

You are unfair to say I don't miss you. I do indeed, and think of you often. Write a happy letter next time. I'll look for it. Tell me more about the business, and don't be disappointed if you can't make money as fast as you'd like. You are sure to win if you are patient. With good wishes from my heart,

ANNE.

Chapter XVIII

A MONEY panic not wholly unlooked for fell upon the country. Railroads went under, stocks fell, banks failed, and in the depression ruin was written after prominent names. Others, while holding an apparently unchanged position, had lost heavily and expected the worst.

David was one of the latter. By August he found himself but a little way from the edge of disaster. The calamity stunned him. He thought of his uncalculated expenditures, of Olga's insatiable demands. After seven sleepless nights he went to Newport, where, unmindful of her empty country-house on the Sound, Olga had rented a cottage. They had an interview on the big terrace fronting the sea. By this time they had reached the condition of

null domesticity when they saw each other as seldom as possible, and had interviews. David was tenderly considerate. He went into the most tiresome business details, trying to simplify them and make her understand. She scarcely listened. He knew that by the expression of her quiet eyes. He urged the need of economy. She shrugged her shoulders with a tolerant smile, but offered no resistance when he spoke of selling the country-house on Long Island and the eccentric stable. Secretly she was tired of them both.

“It seems immensely stupid to let your affairs get so muddled,” she said, in her soft voice; “but you’ll pull out all right. Men always do.”

“You don’t understand, Olga. This is no passing breeze. We are in the midst of a storm, and how it will end God alone knows. The ‘Citizen’ is safe. I am the heaviest stockholder there, and if the worst comes I can sell my interest.”

“But the worst won’t come,” she

said slowly, and looked up at him from under her shady hat with an expression not unlike hatred.

“You’d better face now what might be. I hardly know where I stand.”

He spoke coldly. He was antagonized by her tranquil selfishness when he remembered his nights of suspense.

“But you’ll come out of it all right,” she quietly insisted. “Fortunes go up and down. Other men have been in awkward places lots of times, but they have managed to escape unhurt, and you must do the same. Bertie Ogden was telling me only the other day that when things were lively in Wall street, and some men failed, it was the time for others to seize the opportunity and make money. He said it was like vultures battenning on a wounded bird. Suppose you batten a little, David? Or are you too conscientious? I wish I understood business. I’d tell you what to do.”

She stood up and shook out her mauve lace-ruffled skirt. He saw she

was pale to the lips. After the kiss of greeting she had not touched him or spoken one word of comfort or courage. And he hoped for these things still from her, though since she bore his name she had taken no pains to cheat him.

"One needs money to seize the chance of standing in a fallen man's place," he said, trying to be patient. "What if I have none? If I paid our tremendous debts, which a few months ago it seemed only consistently fashionable to accumulate, I'd have scarcely anything but my interest in the paper left. Do you quite realize now where we stand? Do you know what it costs to live as we've been living? I've been very generous with you, Olga. You can't say I've denied you anything, even when I should, perhaps."

"Generous?" she said, her eyelids falling insolently. "I don't like that word. It's out of fashion between husbands and wives. When you married me, what you had became mine.

I spent it as my right. If you'd interfered, you'd soon have understood that I held this view."

She looked frivolous and winsome as she stood in the soft light, striking a long-stemmed rose against her skirt as she spoke. David felt a mixed sensation of tenderness, pity, and amusement seize him at the thought that the right to her husband's purse was the only advanced problem Olga had been interested enough to attempt to solve. Despite the crisis of the moment and his sore heart, he was disposed to question her farther. He leaned forward, letting his elbow rest on his knee, and seizing the head of the rose she toyed with, held her so.

"But I don't agree with you," he said quietly.

"Oh, I suppose you'd have doled me out dollars if you'd dared and made me keep an account," she said. "Perhaps that's your view."

"No. As I said before, although you do not like the word, I am gener-

ous. I would give you half my income, or more, perhaps, but your right to it I deny."

"I can't argue with you. I only know what I think."

"Can't you tell me why you think it?"

"Well, I married you. I've given up my freedom for you, made your life mine, therefore everything you possess should be equally mine," she said insolently.

"But in becoming my wife do you make me your debtor?"

"Well, something of that sort."

"My dear Olga,"—and David looked at her with wise and tender eyes,—
"you are not the first woman who has made that mistake. Just consider the matter from a reasonable point of view."

She looked out at sea, her face expressing rebellion and unbelief.

"Marriage should be a bond bringing as much happiness to a woman as to a man. I asked you to marry me

because I loved you. I supposed you came to me as gladly for the same reason. Had I thought otherwise, nothing under heaven would have made me accept you as a wife. I didn't want a sacrifice, I didn't want to buy you, and if either of these things has happened I may count myself a wretched man. Therefore, at the beginning, we stood equal in love. Loving each other, we married. We were unequally mated in regard to fortune. It was all mine. Do not misunderstand me. I was glad it was so. But why should half what I personally possess become yours, when a third or a fourth is more than enough for you to be extravagant upon? Perhaps because you think you've made me happy? Weren't you as happy to be with me? Or perhaps because you gave up your freedom to share my life? That should be no loss if you loved me, dear. Besides, loving you, didn't I gladly surrender a wider liberty? That equal division as a right, of which there's been a great deal said

lately, ought, in my view, only to exist under two conditions."

"I am curious to hear what they are," said Olga scornfully.

"Where a man of fortune is mad enough to buy a woman as his wife, aware that she has no love for him" —

"Well?"

His fingers stole up the flower-stem until they clasped hers wistfully.

"Or where a woman becomes a mother," he said very softly. "Olga, the woman who accepts and makes beautiful this responsibility might rightly command not half, but all, her husband's fortune, though she had been a beggar-maid and he a king. They are not equal there. Then she has sacred rights. She becomes a divine mystery. Then he might well worship her. His heart's blood should not be too precious to spend for her. Do you understand me, dear?"

She suffered his fingers to cling to hers while she continued to look at the sea. There was prayer in the hand-

clasp. He was trying to read her thoughts. Her bosom stirred a little under its laces, her eyes were almost tender and doubtful. But a shade settled upon her beautiful face, and with it came decision. The rose fell from her fingers.

“You go to extremes, David,” she said, with a tolerant smile. “When we have children, later, — some time or other, — I won’t ask your heart’s blood nor want to be considered a mystery. I’ll be content with a yacht or a house in London, or something thoroughly practical, as you’ll see. I’m going to drive. Will you come?”

“No, I must go back to town to-night.”

“Then we’ve finished about this tiresome money business?” she asked, lifting a pair of long gloves from the back of a chair.

“We have if I’ve made you understand our position,” and he passed his hands over his face in a distracted way.

“You really mean we’re in danger of beggary?” she asked, with sudden passion. “Do you mean that?”

“Must I go over it all again? Don’t you believe me? Don’t suppose I’m trying to terrorize you. What I say now is the simple truth, and I’ll say it clearly, leaving out all the technicalities of a business explanation. In the present crisis more than half my principal has depreciated to almost nothing; a good deal has been lost. Suppose the rest goes?”

He faced her. His lips were set in a line of endurance, around his eyes were the haggard traces of care, the thick lock which fell over his forehead had a grayness which aged him. It seemed to him that had she been capable of even a little pity she would have come to him, taken his face in her hands, and kissed him.

She pursed up her lips and considered a moment. When she spoke quietly, there was concentrated meaning in her tones.

“I shouldn’t like to be poor again. I don’t think I’d take that condition of affairs calmly. It seems to me I’d do something reckless; I don’t know what.”

She went to him and clasped her arms, bare to the elbow, around his neck.

“Do you love me at all still?” she asked earnestly. “You don’t love me as you used to, but do you love me at all?”

He bent his lips to her wrist, and a terrible sadness came into his eyes.

“I love you, dear. I want to save you from pain.”

“Then don’t become a poor man, David. Don’t, in God’s name! Do anything to get the money back,” she said, moved out of herself for the first time. “I’ve had poverty all my life, all my life. Oh, how I loathe it! Yes, I loathe it! You think me selfish. I know you do, and I am. But I wouldn’t really harm you nor hurt you if I can have an easy life and not the gall of poverty again. I’m not a great woman, nor a

particularly good woman, but I think if I were robbed of this life" — and she looked into the rich, dim rooms — "I might be a hard, bad woman. Save me from that in saving yourself!" And she clung to him. "Save me, David! Promise you will!"

"I promise," he said in a tone which set her apart from him.

As he crossed the terrace to the open window he trod on the flower lying between them.

Chapter XIX

IT was the evening of Election Day. Broadway was a jumble of American types moving under a light fog which made every street-lamp a star in a veil.

From the windows of the street-car in which Anne sat she saw the straggling processions giving enthusiastic party cries, politicians on the corners, and ragged boys racing past with barrels and shutters which were to blaze later in splendid impartiality, no matter which side won.

It was after six o'clock, and she was on her way to the "Citizen" with a "special" on a timely topic David had asked her to write. She could have sent it down, but the idea of going to the old place on this wild night when Newspaper Row was a seat of war had

been persistently with her all day. The building in the upper part of the town where she now spent her days was quiet and had a rarefied editorial flavor. It was not as dear as these slimy, crowded streets, with offices as confused as ant-hills, in nearer neighborhood to the sky. Lime-light and the smell of grease-paint will awaken numbed longings in the mind of an actor who has forsworn the buskin, and the same fascination drew Anne to the "Citizen" to-night for a taste of the old life which had the savor of salt.

She left the car and made her way among the crowds around the City Hall. There were packed masses gathered early to wait for the first election signal-lights on the big buildings. There were others pressed against the great newspaper barracks where bulletins in black capitals told of political failure or success, according to the point of view. It seemed to Anne that the confused noises of the warring earth must at last besiege heaven as a sob.

At the entrance of the "Citizen" building an electric light as fierce as the politics of the paper blazed upon the moving crowds. It fell upon many faces, all earnest, strained, or preoccupied, and on one as familiar to Anne as her hand. David was among the number coming down the muddy stone hall, and she made her way toward him.

But a second glance brought her to a standstill. She read consternation and despair in his changed face. As he pushed his way toward the door without a glance on either side, she waited in anxiety till he should reach her and she would know what grief had come upon him. But his eyes met hers blankly as he passed on without a word.

Anne hesitated, gazing at the angle where he had disappeared; then an irresistible desire to hear him speak forced her back to the street. She followed him, the "special" forgotten in her hand.

He was suffering from some shock,

and fear made riot in her thoughts. Confused ideas of unhappiness in his home, disaster, the death of some one dear, the loss of faith, crowded one another in her mind as she hurried on through the mist, her eyes upon him.

She noticed that nothing attracted his attention, not the raucous cries of newsboys, the arrest of a thief, nor the bulletins heralding coming election triumphs. Filled by a storm which drew his thoughts inward, he walked with unseeing eyes; and Anne followed him, conscious only of the ache in herself and the desire to be near him. So they swept on, two atoms in the human stream, now in shadow, now in light, until Newspaper Row was left well behind and the big bridge was reached.

Anne understood the feelings which had urged David here. It was the solitude which a lighthouse lends above a snarling sea. The city lay beneath a pall of vapor. Light came hazily from the peaked shadows of houses, seeming from this height the pitiful abode of

earth-grubbers. Search-lights from towers, winking rays from crimson lamps on street-cars far below, wavered on the fog, and the *adagio* of human life sweeping upward was an unsyllabled moaning as if from the heart of a giant Tantalus.

When the street scenes were left behind and the river raced beneath the bridge, the voice was the same as the city's in another key. Wave slipped into wave with sighing, and the water torn by churning boats gushed in a rippling minor.

In the shade between the towers David paused. He stood with folded arms and looked back to where the lights on the "Citizen" building flamed like great stars. The pallor of his face, the contracted brow, the long look full of dejection, told of absolute surrender to despair.

Anne watched him, while passers-by eddied between them. She longed to slip her hand into his, to know she was desired and necessary in his life. Her

throat ached, her heart went wildly out to him. But all desire to make him conscious of her presence left her. He had come there to face his grief alone. He had no need of her. She turned away and left him to his implacable thoughts, the solitude, and night.

Chapter XX

WHEN David reached home it was after eight o'clock. He went at once to the library and touched the bell.

"Has Mrs. Temple gone out yet?" he asked the servant.

"No, sir. Mrs. Temple's dressing. She's almost ready, sir."

"Ask her to stop here on her way out."

He sat down before the fire. The grip of his fingers upon his knees showed nervous intensity; his eyes were strained.

Overhead he heard Olga's light steps. She was busy with puff and powder-box preparing for the part she was to play at the Amateur Club that night. The rôle was comedy. It would be altered after hearing one word from his lips.

He looked restlessly toward the door. After his self-communing on the bridge above the never-quiet river the stillness of the house was tormenting; it seemed waiting for the crisis; the clock in the shadow beyond the door seemed a soft-tongued watcher spying upon him.

Olga would soon come, and he would tell her all. She would suffer bitterly. But he could feel no pity for her, none for himself. He had been bitten by anguish in the foggy night with the river-lights around him. Now he felt like a stone.

As he heard Olga's step he rose and faced the door. She came with some light word of greeting on her lips, but it was not spoken, and she remained in an advancing pose, her eyes upon him. They presented a violent contrast, creatures of different worlds, it seemed, — Frivolity looking on the face of Pain.

As Lady Teazle Olga wore the gown required for the quarrel scene. Laces and jewels were mysteriously arranged on the stiff pink brocade, her throat

was like snow, and so was her high coifed hair; her dreaming eyes were made insinuating by a line of cosmetic; a touch of carmine was on her cheeks. She was radiant, dainty, alluringly false.

The night dewes clung to David. His hair was wet and roughened by his restless fingers. Each feature was sharpened from the rigors of fierce emotion. His sunken eyes, which had scarcely known sleep for a week, were as dull as if blindness had come upon them.

“What has happened?” Olga asked, after that long, stupefied look; and there was fear in her eyes. She did not move toward him. Her hand upon the back of a chair seemed a carved part of it.

“I’ve had news, Olga, news which I received by a private source to-day, which all the country will know to-morrow, when the wheels of business roar again.”

“Bad news? You speak coolly enough, yet look — oh, how you look! Have you seen a ghost?”

She roused herself and went nearer the fire, but her curious eyes kept watch upon him.

“I have seen a ghost,” David said, in the same slow tones; “one I’ve long feared.”

“What do you mean? You are ridiculous.”

“I faced the ghost of myself, Olga, for a bitter hour to-night” — and he drew her quickly to him — “the ghost of what I must be in the future. It has no likeness to my past or present self. In making its acquaintance I suffered, but I had to accept it, and so must you, dear, so must you.”

She paled under her rouge and her eyes were frightened. She let him lift her passive arms and kiss her tenderly, and still by her half-dazed glance he knew she was waiting for the confirmation of her fears.

“Olga, many fortunes were lost to-day. Men rich yesterday are poor to-night. My dear, my dear, I’m so sorry for you, so sorry to say it, — I am one of them.”

“Poor?” The word came slowly, and she drew away, her brow bent like a child’s over a task. He could see the pulse going rapidly in her throat, but other than this she displayed no feeling.

“So we are poor?” she said more emphatically. “Will you tell me about it? I hardly think I realize it. It doesn’t seem possible.”

She seated herself at the table and took her chin into the embrace of her palm. As she did so the diamonds on her wrists and fingers flashed under her eyes. She spread both hands on her knees and thoughtfully gazed at them. Poor, while these stones made her flesh radiant, and laces holding years of the workers’ lives rested under her fingers. It seemed impertinent, impossible. Yet she knew it was true, and in her own way faced the inevitable.

“Tell me just what you mean,” she said with composure. “What have you lost, and how?”

He went into minute particulars so that no part of the truth should be

hidden from her. He told her all as gently as possible, but held out no false hopes. It was an account of irremediable failure.

"And why did you go into these ventures, risk so much?" Olga asked, a judicial light in her eyes.

"In an effort to be too rich," and folding his arms he nodded sadly at her. "You remember the day at Newport," he continued, "when you begged me to leave nothing undone in trying to get back what I'd lost? I tried to keep my promise to you, Olga, and I failed."

"Do you mean there is nothing left? You own the paper?" she asked impatiently, and added, with something of desperation, "don't you own the paper?"

"No, I hold the controlling interest, but I must sell it."

"Why?"

"To pay debts — mine, yours. There are plenty of them."

"And then?"

"Then we'll have to learn courage."

“I mean,” she said distinctly, “what will you do after you let the ‘Citizen’ go? You haven’t any tools to sharpen; you haven’t any trade to fall back on, have you?”

Instead of noticing the mockery of her voice he said simply:

“Oh, but I have! I’ve thought it all out. Journalism is my trade. I’ll ask for the managing editor’s post when I sell out, and I’ll get it.”

“How interesting, David! What salary goes with that work?”

“Four thousand a year.”

She received the words in silence and stared into the fire. David, smarting in the grip of an unshared sorrow, stood like an alien on his own hearth. Never had he read her so successfully. How little he ever was to her — to-night, nothing. She had never loved anything in the world except herself. She never would. It was torment to expect from her more than she could give. And yet she was so convincingly fair to believe her cold made nature a liar.

As he watched her his heart grew heavier with a new defeat. She was his wife. At a moment like this they should not sit apart with unspoken thoughts. He no longer dwelt upon her selfishness. He put away the philosophy which counselled him to expect nothing from her. He only knew that to make the dark future bearable they must face it hand in hand. He moved nearer to her, longing to make her meet his eyes and become one with him in soul during this hour of tempest. The impulse shrank back, wounded, when she looked up and laughed.

“Do you know what I’ve been thinking of?” she asked. “I’ve been keeping my first account book in fancy—just how we can live on your four thousand a year instead of fifty. I became quite familiar with the apartment we’ll have, the two maids, the one wine at dinner. I’ve allowed myself about three really good gowns with silk linings, and I could see you in the evening clothes of last year’s cut. Isn’t it funny,

David? Isn't it all deadly funny?" She pressed her hands upon her excited eyes and laughed again.

When David could speak, he closed his hand nervously on her shoulder and bent over her.

"Don't say such things," he said. "Oh, don't. This is an hour to bring us closer. Olga, it changes all our lives. It must change us, too. Can't you see that? Can't you see how we must help each other now?"

"Of course, it will change everything," she said quietly.

"But I want it to change us, Olga," he prayed. "Listen, dear, listen! We'll not have so much to crowd out love and the peace of home, without which no life is happy. Let us come nearer, dear, and be to each other now what we've never been, even in the early days of our marriage."

When David had felt himself master of his fate, a plea like this would have been impossible. But defeat had unnerved and humbled him. Olga, what-

ever she was, was all he had, and in broken pride he was weak enough to crave a tone, a look, rich in the felicity of a grief shared. He had not realized his loneliness until he permitted the want to take expression, but once unleashed the desire for sympathy was like the grip of thirst.

He flung himself on his knees beside her and held her close.

“Oh, Olga, my dear, come to me — won’t you? You’ve seemed to need me little, you’ve seemed cold, yet you loved me in the beginning. Our life had a promise then it hasn’t kept. Can we find the best now, Olga, when other things are gone? Oh, can we find it?” he cried in bitter longing.

The words thrilled through Olga. She felt an awe of him. His soul, it seemed, a stranger, looked through his miserable eyes, awaiting her reply.

“You loved me when you married me, Olga. My wife, you love me now. Tell me so, tell me so!”

“Why, yes, you foolish fellow, I love

you, of course," she said, gently touching his face with her fingers.

She glanced sideways at the clock. It was half-past nine. Fortunately she had dressed early, as the scene in which she was to appear would not begin until after ten. It would be necessary to go soon, yet with David in this unusual mood she feared to speak of the engagement which he evidently did not think of, despite her strange costume.

His heavy eyes looked into hers. He had flung away his unimpeachable reserve in humbly praying for her love, and Olga dimly realized how much he must have suffered before this possibility was reached. The thought even crossed her mind that it would be marvellous and might be an agreeable sensation to love a man as her husband desired to have her love him, so that, ruined, she might be his hope and exult in this, though everything else was lost. There were women in the world who loved men that way. She had often heard so.

"You shall have what you want, my

dear; yes, just as much as I can give you," David whispered, his head on her shoulder, his lips on her throat. "It won't be so hard for me to do without things. I'll work, too. In a few years I may make some lucky stroke — and then — life will go more easily. Just let's stand by each other and be happy in spite of all."

"In spite of all," Olga echoed, an unnoticed frown passing over her brow when the clock struck the half hour after nine.

"You didn't know the suspense I suffered from, Olga," David went on, finding it necessary to ease his reawakened pain by talking of it. "There were days when I saw doom sidling to me and knew in my soul there was nothing to be done to keep it back — nights when I walked the floor forecasting the future. Why, when the terrible truth came upon me to-day it should have been no stranger. I had faced it many times in fancy. But I must have hoped without knowing it, for it was a blow."

She felt him shudder. He held her more closely and closed his eyes.

"I am so dazed and sick from it all," he said, "but now the worst is over, for I've told you, dear. I hated to tell you. It seemed a cruel thing to do. You don't blame me, do you?"

"No, you couldn't help it," she said softly.

He snatched at the words hopefully.

"I couldn't," he said, "oh, indeed I couldn't! I did all for the best. Oh, yes, I'm glad the telling is over, Olga! And we've made a compact, haven't we? We'll stand by each other and love each other better, won't we?"

"Yes, dear, yes."

"Oh, I am glad!"

The last words were heavy with exhaustion, and a hope animated Olga. She kissed him on the lips and said as if she were speaking to a child:

"You are worn out, dear."

"It seems a year since I have slept," said David. "I could sleep now."

"Suppose I call Robbins and tell him

to get your bath and bed ready. You need a good sound sleep to set you up. Shall I tell him?"

"No, no," he said drowsily. "Don't go away from me."

"But you should get some sleep, David. You look — awful."

"Let me stay here. You're so soft and warm and sweet."

With a sigh he laid his head upon her knee and lifted her cool hand to his eyelids. She passed the other very gently across his forehead and let the fingers move lightly in his hair.

"So!" he murmured. "Oh, this is peace, peace, rest" —

The room became silent. Olga looked from David's haggard profile on her knee to the hands of the clock, stealing on relentlessly. If she left at ten sharp, she would be in time. The pupils of her eyes had grown large from excitement. A small, intensely scarlet spot burned unusually on her cheeks. She felt a desire to shriek, to get into the air at once. But with the remarkable purpose

which had never failed her she kept the meaningless smile on her lips as she trailed her fingers over David's forehead.

The stillness deepened. There were no sounds save the clock's tick and David's even breathing. Sometimes a cab rattled by. A laugh, a footstep, the distant call of a newsboy shouting news of the election, disturbed without dispelling the dead quiet.

It seemed a weary time to Olga before David's hold on her hand that shielded his eyes loosened. She watched his fingers slip down his cheek, his arm fall to his side. She bent over him and listened to the deep, weighted breaths telling of an exhausted body. Her task was done. Sleep, as inexorable as death, conquered him for the time.

Olga gently lifted his head, and with no sound save the rustle of her crisp skirt slid from beneath the pressing shoulders. With the same caution she lowered his cheek to the leather hollow of the chair. She stood above him,

holding her breath, waiting. There was nothing to fear. The face on which oblivion had set its mark stared up at her. She gave a short sigh of satisfaction, lifted gloves and cloak, and retreating backward reached the door. For a second she paused, a bit of brilliant coloring against the curtains. They closed after her, and David was alone.

As if at that moment a meddlesome spirit had whispered the truth to him in a dream, he sighed deeply and throwing his arms upward made a pillow of them. Unconsciously his body had assumed the pose of one who had said good-by to hope.

Chapter XXI

AFTER this David made no further attempts to win or soften Olga. When a servant awakened him hours later, he had accepted not only the knowledge of her desertion, but the reiterations of his sick heart: "Useless! Hopeless!" He would never cheat himself again. Olga had been wholly consistent with his estimate of her. The folly of hoping too much had been his.

In the dark days following this accepted realization of failure he was cold and silent. He was gentle with Olga, but he lived within himself, and his heart was like a stone. He could feel a pity for her occasional outbreaks of disappointment and rage, but a capability of actively regretting what he had lost seemed dead. The changes following

within two months found him com-
plaisant.

The town-house was sold, together with everything else, and for the time being, at Olga's request, they made their home with her father. When the "Citizen" passed into other hands, David retained his editorial position as an employee.

This latter sacrifice was a bitter one. Had he permitted himself to dwell upon it his hours at the familiar desk would have been tinctured with anguish. But he had a force in him, a grandeur of spirit, that made defeat imposing. Even Anne might have been deceived by his unchanged manner but for the one night of self-betrayal when she had stood on the bridge, silent, within reach of his hand.

She went frequently to Dr. Ericsson's during these trying days. Life there was like a creature which had received a blinding blow between the eyes and stood dazed, miserably uncertain on which path to advance.

Mrs. Ericsson had a grievance against fate, but fate was too impersonal for attacks. It was more satisfying to pour her regrets and accusations into ears which heard. She was like a gnat, never stinging deep, never alighting on the same spot twice, yet stinging always.

“After all my hopes, my work,—look where we are!” she said once, her head nodding in nervous agitation, her furtive eyes glancing over Olga’s impassive face and restful body. “The nights I’ve lain awake, planning, hoping! You can’t say I left anything undone. If ever a woman slaved to settle a daughter well”—

“You ought to be satisfied then,” said Olga amiably; “you have reason to pat yourself on the back. Why do you run on this way? No one is blaming you.”

“Oh, if you’d only married old Rodney, or Baker!” she said desperately.

“One a fossil and the other a beast!”

“Yes, that’s all very well, but they had money bound down solidly the

way it is in England. I never hankered for an American fortune. You must admit that. They are here to-day and gone to-morrow."

Her face worked for a moment in silence. If Olga had met with some sudden, frightful death her mother could not have contemplated her with more despairing anguish. Her folded hands expressed defeat. She had failed in her life-work. Pain, ignominy and rancor were in the thought.

"Well, make the best of things, mamma."

"Oh, don't talk to me! Words are easy. The best—there is no best. It is all bad, horrible, maddening. What on earth was David Temple thinking about?"

"You don't suppose he wanted beggary, do you?" asked Olga plaintively.

"Don't be a fool, Olga. Can't I speak? Can't I express an opinion without your flying at me?"

Olga sighed, and relieved her impatience by kicking off her slipper.

Mrs. Ericsson darted to the door, but paused for a last word.

"I should think David Temple would hide his head! Why, he has a way with him as if he were an emperor with slaves to rush out at the crook of his finger. Such conceit! And yet he couldn't take care of his money."

"It requires more cleverness and foresight, my dear, to do that in these days than to be an emperor," said Olga, as if touching on a subject in which she had no personal interest.

"Some day I'll let him know my opinion of the whole business."

"Have you done anything else but bestow your opinion on him and every one else, gratis, at all hours of the day and night, since our change of tune? Now, have you? Oh, try to be a little original, mamma! I wish you would."

Mrs. Ericsson glared at Olga's faintly smiling face; but as if no words could express her wrath she skipped out and clapped the door loudly after her.

Anne often wondered at David's forbearance for Mrs. Ericsson's most spiteful outbursts were levelled at him. Through him, in some way, by something done or left undone, the money for which she had worked so long with Olga as a bait had been lost. Olga was the wife of a poor man. There was nothing worse to happen.

In the meantime Anne found herself studying Olga. She mystified her more completely every day. Her spasms of despair, sharp and short-lived, were over now. For hours she would lie dreaming, her hands behind her head, the faintest smile sometimes fluttering around her lips. Except for a walk or drive, she seemed to enjoy letting the days brush by her. Dinner-hour often found her lounging in the loose gown of the morning. She never spoke of what she thought so constantly, nor what her plans were, if she had any. No one questioned her, David least of all. She showed no desire to found a home based upon their changed condi-

tions. He was willing to wait until she had familiarized herself with her new future, and had roused herself to active interest in it.

“My dear, God lets some of us live too long,” Dr. Ericsson said to Anne one day as she leaned over his library chair. “I am one of these. I can’t contemplate the lives which this one roof covers without a feeling of dismay for the future. Better for me if I didn’t live to see that which I must see, I fear. Oh, why weren’t you my child?” he said, with longing. “You have a heart, a mind, real human blood goes through your arteries. You are a woman, not a finely articulated piece of flesh. You understand me? I wish you were my child.”

“Uncle, why do you say this? You make me afraid of something. Has anything happened you haven’t told me about?”

“I’m afraid of Olga,” he said shortly.

“Why? She seems not to care any more,” replied Anne, while she knew

he was about to express some of the fear she had felt without understanding.

“That’s just it: she seems not to care. But she does, and I know her.” He sat with his eyes fixed on his veinous hand as it thoughtfully tapped the table. “At least when I say I know Olga I go too far. But I know the signs of storm in her. She is silent, thinking — of what? She writes a lot of letters. She always goes out alone. I’m afraid of her,” he said with a sigh.

One gray December day near Christmas, Anne found herself at twilight in a street going eastward from Union square. She had come to purchase an etching which a few days before had attracted her in the window of a dusty basement shop; it was a study of a Greek girl in profile, leaning on the rail of a seat in an ancient theatre; flower-crowned, with fan of peacock’s feathers on her knee, she seemed pensively waiting for the first sonorous line of an Athenian chorus. The idea of possess-

ing it had stayed with Anne for days, and she felt happy as she watched the near-sighted old dealer wrapping it up.

She was in no mood to hurry away. In the shadowy place where she sat, old age and dust were masters, a slow-tongued clock weightily recorded the ever-same moments, and on the street above the basement steps a human tide flowed that scarcely had its equal for variety in any other city on earth. Waves of Bohemianism, vagabondism, beggary, mingled there, accompanied by a sweeping gamut of human sounds and coloring stolen from many lands.

As she waited, her elbow on the counter, her eyes fell upon a woman descending the steps of a house opposite. It was Olga. She walked hurriedly to a waiting cab. The air of the fine world about her, her radiant face seen in that unkempt, ill-flavored byway suggested a prismatic bubble on a murky tide.

Anne went toward the door, but paused as she saw a man, bare-headed, pen in hand, evidently a clerk, hurry down the steps of the house Olga had just left, and speak to her. She went back with him and vanished through the open doorway.

"She's very beautiful — ay, isn't she?" murmured the old dealer over Anne's shoulder. "There isn't a face in all my portfolios to compare with hers. Those heads by Greuze, that woman by Botticelli, the Lady Hamilton portrait with the scarf around her head, — why, even the originals of these, and I've seen them all, are nothing to her. You think so too, don't you, miss?" he asked, enthusiasm in his dim eyes.

"You mean the lady who has just gone into that house again?"

"I've grown so that I watch for her coming," he said.

Anne's heart sank.

"She comes to this street often?"

"Two or three times a week." He rubbed his dry palms together. "Oh, I

am an admirer of beauty in any form, — man, woman, child, or horse or dog, — and that woman's face makes me feel young again. She's a beautiful being," he concluded, with old-fashioned, awed respect.

For the moment Anne could not speak. Her eyes rested on the cab waiting for Olga, as she pondered on the probable meaning of these secret visits, disclosed to her by chance. There was something sinister in them. But she must know more, she must know all.

"That looks like a business house of some sort," she ventured.

"So it is, one of those theatrical buildings, full of managers, agents, or something. In fact, the whole street just bristles with them."

Anne made an unceremonious exit. Crossing the street just as Olga appeared again on the threshold, they came face to face under the street lamp in the gusty twilight, now almost gone.

The faintest frown crossed Olga's

brow, the faintest color quivered under the white skin, and then retreated. Her voice betrayed her; she was a little breathless from surprise.

"I never dreamed of seeing you here, Anne," she said. "Will you get in and come with me to dinner?"

"I can't to-night. But if you have time you might take me home first. It wouldn't be much out of your way."

"Of course not," and she gave the order.

Nothing was said, and the cab turned into Broadway. The silence was eloquent with waiting.

Olga felt Anne's eyes wistfully contemplating her. "Well, don't keep your thoughts to yourself," she said at last, with a nod and smile; "I'm sure they'll prove interesting."

In response Anne slipped her arm around her waist and held her closely.

"I've no right to speak to you, Olga, about your affairs, but I must risk seeming presumptuous," she said. "By accident I saw you come out of that house

to-day. The man in the picture-shop told me you go there often. I know, too, the meaning of your visits. Promise me you'll give up this mad idea. Promise me, Olga."

A smile rippled over Olga's face.

"Why, you're white and trembling, you silly, passionate Anne. What mad idea? What in the world, you foolish girl, do you mean?"

"Don't go on the stage. Don't, my dear, don't. It would crush David's pride to the dust to have you go. Can't you see? Why, the world would think he had sent you to retrieve his fortunes; it would seem as if his ill-luck had forced you there. No proud man could endure the position" —

"David! David! Always David!" and Olga looked at her sharply. "Is there no one in the world to be considered but him?"

"Your mother. You know how she would suffer."

In her earnestness she laid her cheek against Olga's.

“Will you listen to me — will you?”

Olga withdrew Anne's arm, but held her fingers in a light clasp.

“You are such a woman, Anne! How you leap to conclusions! My dear, does it follow that I am going on the stage because to break the monotony of such days as I have now I go occasionally to hear a manager make tempting offers which I haven't the smallest intention of accepting?” and she settled herself more cosily against Anne. “I'm a vain creature. There's no use ignoring the truth. It's a comfort to hear myself called a genius, a modern Peg Woffington, and all the rest. It gives a sense of power—it's refreshing. If I cheat myself and cheat the manager, it's a pleasure to me and seriously hurts no one.”

“But suppose in the end these people might persuade you, Olga, might dazzle you?”

“My dear, I'm not a fool. To step from society to the professional stage would be like challenging every narrow-

mind person to hiss at you. You might be gifted of God, but no one would believe it, and every critic would endeavor to be witty at your expense."

She nodded and looked very wise.

"No, I've gotten over the madness I once had. Experience has made me wise, sadder too. I see my future very clearly before me, and I'm gradually drifting to it, although I couldn't accept it at first. I shall have to chasten my desires, cultivate a *penchant* for a comfortable, quiet life on a few thousand a year with David, found a family, and take to bonnets permanently. Oh, I see it," she said, with semi-humorous pathos. "I am becoming resigned quietly, in my own fashion. This visit to Zerand, the great business Napoleon of the drama, was, I promise you, my last tangential flight after a bit of excitement."

She snapped her fingers like a farewell to fancy and began to talk of other things. Anne felt a sensation of relief. After all, it was not as bad as she had

feared. Olga had simply been feeding her vanity on crumbs. She could understand the pleasure it was to her fanciful, shallow mind to steal away to these private interviews in a back street, hear herself extolled as a genius, and listen to highly colored plans she dared not countenance. But a little while ago she had paid extravagantly for glitter and show of first-class quality: to have her beauty admired in a theatrical office by a puffy-eyed manager, and feel a ghostly wave of the lost excitement, was evidently but the survival of the old instincts under forlorn conditions.

Olga's kiss at parting was childish and tender.

"Never breathe that you discovered my silly dissipation," she said, adding with a laugh, "David would be angry with me — shocked; and you know his emotions must be preserved in tissue paper, so they retain the gloss."

The door of the cab closed sharply, the lamplight flickered on her white brow and vivid lips as she looked back.

It seemed to Anne that just for a breath's space a look of defiance and determination crossed her eyes. It was surely fancy.

During several weeks following, life at the old house took on a more cheerful color.

Olga ceased dreaming and seemed satisfied. She was often the gayest of companions and assumed a whimsical tyranny over David vastly preferable to her settled indifference. Sometimes during these days her eyes had an almost celestial light in them, her smile was confiding.

David almost dared hope again for that which he had decided could never be his. He found himself wondering if she could be content with the little he now had, after all; if in her own fashion, which never could be anticipated, she would come to help him, love him a little. He put the thought from him, yet knew he was hoping; and he waited.

In January, in the busy morning hours,

a note was brought to Anne at the office. It was from David and very short :

I hate to send you this, dear Anne. You have been drawn into my misfortunes too much of late. Forgive it, but I must come to you. Olga has gone away at the head of a theatrical company. The blow has prostrated Mrs. Ericsson, and she's dangerously ill. Can you go to the house when you get this?

Anne sat with the letter in her hands, conscious only of unbelief in the words written there. The woman who had done this thing, having smiled and lied harmoniously as she made her unhurried way to the goal of her desires, became suddenly hateful. Anne could not judge of her by herself or measure her by familiar rules. Comprehension was beyond her.

"A liar!" she said aloud. "A cruel liar!"

The noisy streets might have been a desert for all heed she took of them as she hurried to Dr. Ericsson's. She was absorbed in her thoughts. She knew how the papers would seize on this de-

parture and flourish the real and imaginary details of David's private life under big headings; how ably Olga would assist them. Soon her face would stare from every shop-window and decorate tobacco signs; she would be exploited by every bombastic venture dear to the managerial heart. She was not one to succeed by the sovereignty of talent alone, and retire from the limelight to privacy as exclusive as a queen's. Instinct and education made her delight in the clamor of brass. Her mother had been eager to advertise her socially: she would trumpet herself professionally.

When Anne entered her aunt's bedroom, a pang of remorse shot through her heart. Mrs. Ericsson's nervous vigilance and activity had often irritated her, but now her outflung arms expressed apathy, her small shrunken face was almost hidden in the bulging pillow, and her eyes stared at one spot. She was in a sort of syncope. It seemed brutal that all the physician's efforts were to

bring her out of it to a realization of Olga's decisive arrow, which had struck at and levelled even the ruins of her hopes.

It was dusk before the nurse came and Anne could leave the sick-room. She was tired and her head ached. In the hall she met a maid and asked for a cup of tea.

"Shall I fetch it to the doctor's study, Miss Garrick? Mr. Temple's there now. He's just got in. Perhaps he'd like a cup of tea too."

"Yes, and Dr. Ericsson — hasn't he come back yet?"

"Not yet, miss."

There was not a sound in the house as Anne went down the stairs, nor were the lamps yet lit in the study, but there was bright firelight coming out in a broadening track across the open doorway. When she reached the threshold she saw David sitting on the edge of the big table, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the fire.

She reached his side before he was

aware of her presence; when he turned and saw the firelight making her dark eyes still more mysterious, sending its flickerings over her sensitive lips and the dusk masses of her hair, a look of pain changed his face. Truth and sympathy were in her full glance. It was long since a woman's eyes had looked at him so.

"You're so pale," he said gently, taking her hand. "I'm sorry I had to send for you, Anne, but Mrs. Ericsson needs a woman near her. Don't you think so? But as I told you in my note, I feel like a brute dragging you into this wretched house."

His fingers loosened their hold, and he walked into the shadows and out again. There was a look of endurance on his face. He had never seemed braver, and never had his unlikeness to Donald stood out more clearly. She could always yearn over the misfortunes of the latter. For David she could feel only a sad sense of wrath against the inevitable crushing him. He was

a man to dominate his sorrows and carry them unshared.

"How is Mrs. Ericsson?" he asked.

"Still unconscious. It's so strange to see her lying quiet."

"It's just as well," he said sadly. "Bitterness is waiting for her, poor woman!" Then he added abruptly, "Have you seen the papers to-night?"

"No; is it" —

"Yes, it's everywhere. They all have it, except, of course, the 'Citizen.' It hurts me so, Anne! Oh, I'm a fool to let it, I know that! I'll have to endure more sensational reading by and by, no doubt."

Anne sat silent, and he turned to her again.

"Haven't you heard the story, Anne? It's a pity," he said, with a dismal smile. "You have been cheated out of a toothsome morsel of gossip. It's the dinner topic at plenty of houses to-night."

He sat down on the table-edge again and leaned forward, his hands on his knees.

“ Olga went away three days ago to pay a visit to one of her former intimates. She was to be gone a week. Last night I received a letter from her. It was as serene as her eyes. She was going, she said, to make a great name for herself on the stage. The company she headed would play only old comedies, was going straight to San Francisco, from there to Australia, and would appear next fall in New York. If I wished, she would in this way set me on my feet again. This was her *naïve* suggestion. If I objected, some Western court would sever our bonds on the simple charge of desertion. But she must persist under any circumstances in using my name merely because of its business value, since she had already made it famous in society and on the amateur stage. Probably this was the only time she viewed the loss of my fortune complacently, since it would help to give a commercial strength to the name Temple when seen in capitals on a bill-board. Temple! — the name of

the beauty stepping from the drawing-room to the footlights, the name of the man who went down under the thunderbolt of ruin! Why, there's meat for a reporter in the two syllables. Don't you think so? They may even illustrate me," he laughed, his eyes bright with contempt. "The letter ended with the politic hope that I'd be sensible and not kick up a row. Well, I haven't. I've been sensible. But I spent part of to-day in becoming better acquainted with my wife. I was curious to know how she developed her plans. I'll tell you what I learned."

He stood up before Anne and struck his finger with emphasis on his open palm.

"From the hour she knew of my failure she has covertly, determinedly, bent every effort toward the taking of this step. The manager would not star her without heavy security. Then Olga showed what resources lay within her. Smedley Joyce and a few others among her old followers have at her sugges-

tion backed the undertaking as a good business venture. They knew all about it. And I, ignorant, blind, sat opposite Joyce at the Harvard alumni dinner the other night. I didn't dream I was facing my wife's 'angel.' You don't know what that means. Neither did I until to-day. The man who backs a play earns that heavenly title. Smedley Joyce is at present an 'angel,' though a stout one, I grant."

"What will you do?" asked Anne heavily. "Will you bring her back? You might perhaps."

"I shall not try," he said clearly. "I'll do nothing but endeavor to live as if I'd never seen her. It won't be hard." A dark look crossed his face. "If circumstances could by any possibility arise in the future tending to soften me toward her, to make me a fool again, I'd only have to think of this one thing: her gentlest mood, most impulsive caress, and her only promise for a happy future home together were given the night before she went away, when her

railroad ticket was in her purse. This thought would make me a stone."

Anne watched him thoughtfully and understood him. Olga had practised a cheap deception from first to last. Her unmasking had only aroused disgust and bitterness in him. To feel either grief or hate for anything as gaudily false as this woman would be like playing some of the most despairing strains in "Faust" on a penny trumpet.

The maid entered with tea, and they had it in the firelight while the shadows played between them. Anne's heart beat painfully and hard. David began to feel a peace enfold him. This was their first talk alone since the winter night when he had told her of his love for Olga. Then all the tenor of his ecstatic confidence was, "I love her." Tonight his embittered spirit had voiced a different truth: "She has gone, leisurely and coldly, out of my life forever. She brought nothing into it: she takes nothing away."

Chapter XXII

ANNE had entered Dr. Ericsson's house as a member of the family. No one had urged her to go, but she had come to see the necessity of it. After a long illness her aunt had come back to only a quiescent consciousness of life and with body partly paralyzed. The reins of government had fallen from her hands forever, and a woman was needed by her side. Anne did not renounce work to be with her, but she condensed it into as few hours as possible and spent her leisure in the Waverly-place house.

She had found it hard to be unselfish and go, particularly when she knew David had insisted on remaining there and assuming the duties of a son toward the old man he loved and the woman he pitied. She had struggled with her own

heart and had beaten down her pride only after a hard fight. Daily companionship with David Temple was the last thing in the world she desired, and she loved her free life as she loved the sunlight. But there was nothing else to be done. Mrs. Ericsson's apathy was a plea mingling with the voice within her which commanded in the name of duty. If only selfishly, for her own peace, she obeyed it.

More than a year had passed. It had grown to be a right and natural thing to Anne to meet David at breakfast and pour coffee for him, to watch for his coming at night. At first this had seemed unbearable, impossible, but habit is coercing and inflexible and women are adaptable. She even managed not to be discontented, though she lived in a dull atmosphere, in a quiet house where three disappointed lives drifted on.

Olga's name was never heard. Mrs. Ericsson, calm, almost mindless, sat all day by the window of her room, her

eyes fastened on the street. She seemed watching for some one; she always looked out. The attitude had become mechanical long after a realization of the reason for it had died. It was the expression of the passive desire in her maimed brain to watch for Olga's return. David worked harder than ever, apparently unchanged save that he was more reticent. Dr. Ericsson's practice was but a name, and he looked an aged man.

As was expected, the newspapers had made a sensational heroine of Olga. Soon after her departure photographs of her from San Francisco had found their way to Broadway windows and reported interviews with her had been wired to New York papers. These were highly colored and probably false. Gossip tossed her name like a shuttlecock from one to another.

As an actress she had not met with emphatic success. At first people went to see her in great crowds because she was the well-known Eastern belle; they went a second time because she

was a beauty. Soon her vogue lessened. It is one thing to be a rich woman dabbling in a profession, another thing to enter the market and strive with practical workers. The criticism aroused was different too. Olga had found this out. She had been too ambitious. With all her natural talent she was still unformed, really fit only to interpret the rudiments of her art, and what had seemed praise-compelling in fashionable New York, where gloved hands awarded the affirmation of success, was merely promising, sometimes impertinent, where people paid money at a box-office to see a stranger.

Many things that must have stung David were said of her in every paper except his own. But even to Anne's eyes he was impassive. He went into the world, particularly the society of men and clubs, as much as formerly, and those who found pleasure in discussing his affairs behind his back were careful to read the hint in his attitude, and offer neither sympathy nor advice.

May was almost spent. At the corners of the streets barrel organs churned antiquated love-songs; sparrows built their nests in the weakly budding trees; wagons heaped with growing plants halted at area gates; the crannies between the paving-stones held spears of grass as strengthless as the down on a boy's lip.

On a warm night Anne took a hansom to one of the big studio buildings on upper Fifth avenue, to attend a dinner given by a celebrated artist just over from Paris on a visit to his native land.

A brilliant fourteen sat down at the round table, and she found herself between the athletic young novelist who took her in and an Australian capitalist. As dessert came on there was a lull in the entertaining nonsense and piquant discussions between herself and her dinner companion, and she listened to the scraps of conversation around her. The name "Temple," spoken in soft, amused, scornful accents by the Austra-

lian, reached her. His big, bald head was turned from her, but owing to his slow, distinct utterance she could hear almost every word. He was speaking of Olga.

“They fade quickly, those very pale blondes, don’t you think? Excitement and what not have spoiled a very pretty woman in Mrs. Temple. A shocking failure she is, too. In Melbourne, where she tried to force Parthenia down our throats, I assure you she was laughed at. A playful little kitten style of woman in a comedy is as much as she should have attempted. These people never can measure their ability. After years and years of work and work she might have attempted strong parts, but, Lord, not now !”

“She was considered a great beauty here and a very good actress,” came from the listener on the other side.

“Of course, of course. I fancy when she had everything her own way and didn’t have to fag she was healthy and probably a beauty. But she’s down on

her luck. She's anæmic, too, or that dead-white glassy skin of hers means arsenic" —

"Oh, I assure you, no! She was always as white as milk."

"Then she's organically unsound, bloodless, and she hasn't the stuff in her to last. They say she has hysterics like insanity, and her temper's frightful. I know for a positive fact she boxed her coachman's ears in Melbourne."

"Really! And she always seemed so amiable! I can't fancy her even disturbed."

"Disappointment, my dear lady, is like a blistering sun on the sweetest milk — sure to turn it sour, eh?"

"She appeared in London last month. The reports say she was a failure there."

"One hasn't much 'go' playing a losing game. It will be a good thing for the society woman who talks and thinks nothing but stage, stage, stage, to remember one thing — the vast dif-

ference between playing to the big, cold-hearted public, whose eyes are all strabismus, and playing to Tom, Dick, and Harry, with whom she has dined, flirted, or had five o'clock tea. The public is a bull-dog. If it doesn't get what it wants or expects, it bites."

During her drive home the words she had heard stayed with Anne, but insisted on remaining beyond her belief. Olga pitied, ridiculed, faded, — she who had been so secure, so envied! And but little more than a year had gone !

She sat with wide, speculative eyes, watching the sentinel-like lamps flash past, and tried to picture Olga as she had been described. Failure had come and bitterness had followed. Exhausting travel, nervous days and nights, and the pains of wounded vanity had done the rest. Prosperity and confidence in herself had been the qualities forming a foundation for Olga's winning unconcern and amiability. With defeat, with struggle, the real nature had peered

like an ugly face from behind a mask and left her a bitter, turbulent woman, a logical development of the peevish child who scratched.

The house was wrapped in slumber when Anne reached it. But she knew by the light left burning in the library that David had not yet returned. For several days she had only seen him in the mornings.

She went to her aunt's room to see if she slept or needed anything. The light burned low and made big shadows among the bed-curtains, the air was sweet with the odor of lilacs, and a cool wind swept like a sigh through the place.

Anne tiptoed to the bed and looked at the small, huddled figure, the hands lying palms upward on the counterpane, the face turned sideways, resting on the shoulder in the attitude of watching which had become habitual. She brushed a lock of hair from the wet brow, placed the big fan, which had fallen, within reach of her hand,

and crept out, Olga's face haunting her.

A few nights later a letter came to Anne by the last post. It was from London, and she recognized Olga's handwriting. It was the first she had received since her departure. She carried it up to her own room, and even after the door was closed she hesitated with it in her hand, fearing what was written within it.

When she drew it from its cover she read these words:

MY DEAR ANNE: You've had very hard thoughts of me, I know. You never wrote to me yourself, and in the brief notes received from father there was no message from you. However, I'm going to ask you to let my humiliation brush all these thoughts from your mind, for I am humiliated, and it is bitter to say it, I can tell you. I've failed. There's no use mincing words or beating around the bush. I've failed, and I'm ill, very ill. Nobody seems to know just what's the matter with me, and I don't much care. I'm probably dying, and that doesn't matter either. But just now I've a longing to go home. I have heart enough for that. I know mamma is all broken up, but still I keep thinking how pleasant

it would be to lie in my cool green room and have her fuss around me as she used to do when I had a cold or a headache. There's a comfort in this, and in feeling that no matter what I've done I do belong to mamma and she'd never give me the cold shoulder.

But then, as I said, I hear she's not as she was, and perhaps no one else would care to see me at home. Do you think David would take me back? I don't expect his forgiveness, nor that he could the least bit regard me as he used to do. But he may forgive me enough to let me go back to my home, which is his now. I want to go home and rest, and this is all I care about. Will you ask him, Anne, and write to me? I'm so tired of myself. You never can know just how utterly sick and weary I am. My face in the glass frightens me, it is so lean and bloodless. I long so to rest, to fall asleep in a safe place and not think or care what the end may be. You won't believe it, maybe, but I'm not a bit pretty any more. I've gone off horribly. At first I minded, but I don't now. Nothing seems to matter. I've had my cake and eaten it. It disappointed me, and there's no one to blame but myself. Cable me here at "The Langham," and if I may return I'll go home at once. I wish now I'd never gone on the stage. But what's the use of crying when the harm's done? Do try and think kindly of me and welcome me back.

OLGA.

Anne read the letter twice, and the picture her fancy conjured of Olga made a pain rise in her throat. Of course she would speak to David as soon as he came in, and of course Olga would return. The pity in David's heart would let him receive back this wasted, disappointed woman, and she would scarcely remind him of the splendid beauty who had failed him when he needed her most. Soon Olga would be home, creeping like the ghost of herself through the familiar rooms. Her soft step would be heard on the stairs. She might be changed in soul and heart, and in her weakness and defeat be to David what he had longed to make her.

As Anne stood with the letter in her hand she heard the street door close softly. Without giving herself time to think what she should say she went down to the study. The full gaslight poured on David as he stood by the table, his chin lowered. His face was more than fatigued: it was pinched, and she could see a moisture on his fore-

head. He looked up, but did not greet her, or move.

“David,” she said uncertainly, “don’t be angry, but I must speak to you of Olga.”

He drew in his breath and closed his eyes.

“Ah, you know, then, — you know!” he murmured.

“I’ve a letter from her.” And she held it out to him. “She’s very ill and wants to come home. She wants me to ask” —

He seized the hand that held the letter and looked suffering, forbidding.

“You’ll let her come home here, won’t you? I was sure you would. She seems to want nothing else; she doesn’t expect or ask for forgiveness” —

“Oh, hush!” he said wildly and with difficulty, opening his other hand and showing a crushed cablegram. “I can never tell her now that I would have pitied her, yes, even forgiven her the wrong she did me, for she’s dead, Anne. You can read it there. She died to-day.”

Chapter XXIII

IT was a wild night. An icy torrent of rain was tossed by a wind which seemed sent to wail over the world.

The study where David Temple sat was as cheery as firelight and shaded lamplight could make it. He was conscious only vaguely of the sputtering coals sending up fuchsia-tinted sparks, and of the furious rain shaking the window casings, while his thoughts wandered into dreams of other places and times.

Save for the servants, he now lived alone in the old Waverly-place house. It was strange to sit there on this January-night and hear neither voice nor footstep, to find himself listening gladly to the clock's light strokes, feeling depressed when the last vibration had whirred into the silence.

Olga had been dead six months. He thought of her grave in Greenwood; her mother's but the reach of an arm from her — the finale to a story in those two mounds; of Dr. Ericsson, gone to spend his last years in Sweden, in the house where he was born, and which had come to him a few months before through the death of a brother; of Anne, but lately returned to her old rooms, her life unchanged.

David rose and paced the room, a line creeping down between his brows. The silence seemed speaking to him of Anne to-night. She had been the star of his life. He freely acknowledged it. She had drained much of the bitterness from his adversities. No man could have had a more satisfying companion, a better friend. These blessings had been his, though they were neither his right nor his reward.

He wanted to tell her this and more. She had been ill, the result of a heavy cold, and on the morrow would leave for a holiday in the South. Something

urged him not to let her leave New York without expressing what she had no doubt come to realize — how much her going from under the same roof had taken from his life.

“Yes, I miss her,” he said in concentrated accents as he stood still and listened, with the subtler inner hearing, to the silence wrapping the house.

He stepped into the hall. The gas was burning brightly, but the curve of the high staircase was lost in shadow. He thought of how often Anne had come down, humming a song. But a few nights before Dr. Ericsson's departure he remembered her hurrying back half way to say good-night to him, and how her long braid of hair becoming loosened had swept his cheek like a silky lash. It had been an incident for a laugh then, but now the memory of her tress's touch, her hand, her eyes, made him resent his loneliness.

He went into the drawing-room, but came out of it quickly. It was there among the teacups and in the firelight

he had asked Olga to be his wife, there her coffin had stood. It was a hated room. Ghosts were its tenantry.

Going back to the study fire, he lighted a cigar. The past unrolled itself before him, and he tried to forecast the years to come. The deductions from his reasoning were as clear and strong as if spoken by a bell-like voice beside him.

Loneliness was horrible. It turned a man into an intellectual machine, warped his nature, put him out of touch with his kind. Once he had been proud to stand quite alone, absolute master of every heart-throb and every moment, but he had tasted the joy of a sympathetic woman's daily companionship, and was unfitted forever for a self-contained life where the *ego* was supreme and ambition the ruling passion.

If he had learned this from the year of life under one roof with Anne, how much deeper the lesson would be if she had been his wife! If Anne had been his wife! The words filled him with passive regret as he lifted her photo-

graph from the mantel and looked into the eyes which seemed even there to question and comfort him.

If he could have loved her, if he could but love her now, as any man, the greatest, might be proud to love her! His feeling for her was very near the richest his nature could produce. Gentleness and sympathy were in it, pride and reverence. It but lacked passion to make it perfect. This he had known for one woman, an unreasoning, intoxicating love, without substance or depth. Anne did not arouse it in him, he could not add it to the mixed longings which made her necessary to him ; very probably it would forever escape him.

Need this prevent him from asking her to be his wife, from making her happy should she give herself to him ? What he had to offer was better far than what he lacked — the fever of passion which could thrive in the most meagre natures; the most evanescent, the basest ingredient of all in love. Anne could be dear and necessary to

him without this madness which could never come again to him. Without being in love with her, he loved her tenderly. Was there as much importance in the subtle difference as romantic minds supposed ?

His head was cool, his heart craving sympathy. He desired urgently not so much Anne's kiss as her companionship, not to give himself into her power and lose himself in her, but to know the happiness of her dependence on him.

When his cigar was finished, he went back to the table and looked down at the letter he had begun to her.

"My dear Anne." The stereotyped words were so wholly inadequate they irritated him. He crushed the paper in his palm and flung it into the fire. He would go to her. As he took his overcoat and hat from the stand in the hall he muttered impatiently :

"What shall I say to her ? How can I put it to her ?"

In a few moments he was on the street, making his way against the wind to her rooms on Washington place, where some of the most contented hours of his life had been spent.

The flames in the lamps, reflected in the drenched pavements, danced under his feet; the crossed streets lay in stormy shadow; icicles on trees and palings clinked in the rush of the freezing rain; once the numbed face of a beggar looked at him; once a stray dog pressed lonesomely against him as he strode on. The world seemed full of mist and pain, but there was peace in his soul, and when he saw the firelight on Anne's windows he felt almost ashamed of the sense of well-being which came to him while others in the world suffered.

Anne opened the door of the sitting-room herself. She was all in white, of some thick, heavy-falling material, and behind her dark head the room swam in rosy gloom. The air was

heavy with the perfume of roses. He seemed entering a garden with Anne by his side, pale from her illness and with dovelike eyes.

A soul-wave of mutual comprehension made him feel his coming had been half-expected and that she was glad. When he had made her sit again in the low arm-chair and had arranged the silk pillow at a comfortable angle for her head, he sat down beside her and looked at her earnestly.

“Almost well again, aren’t you?” he said gladly. “Your face is getting back its rounded look, and soon you won’t get a single bit of sympathy.”

“I don’t deserve any,” Anne said, an excited catch in her voice. “I assure you, reposing on this pillow in a sort of Cleopatra attitude, I feel quite a fraud. I’d like to have gone for a tramp in this wild rain. Listen to it. How it sighs and sputters, and then it comes on with a sweep!”

While the words left her lips she was thinking that it was strange and troub-

ling to be there alone with David, the firelight on his near face, while beyond the close-curtained windows the storm called and called to them in vain.

She knew why he had come. Her intuitive mind leaping to conclusions told her that words having no kinship to farewell were faltering on his lips. She felt a sudden uneasiness and excitement. The beating of her heart was painful.

“You’ll be gone a month?”

“At least a month,” she nodded. “I’m revelling in the thought of getting back to summer and for the first time smelling a lily-field in bloom. The word ‘Bermuda’ has an exotic sound to me. Have you ever been there?”

“No,” he said absently, and, leaning nearer, said earnestly, “I’ll miss you so, Anne.”

His fingers touched hers, and she met his eyes. They were grave and dominant.

“And how I’ve missed you these last five weeks!” he went on. “I find my-

self listening for your step, for memory plays me cruel tricks. But you are gone, and I have to learn all over the lesson of philosophy. I've grown to hate the place. Just to look at the corner of the table where you used to pour coffee for me makes me blue."

As he spoke quietly and half confidently Anne became aware of a disappointment in herself. He was going to say more. What had been her dearest dream was going to intensify itself into a certainty to-night, and yet she was aware that if some interruption had come and David had been forced to leave her with the words unsaid, she would have been relieved.

"Yes, I've missed you, and I will miss you," he continued, and lifted her hand to his lips. "Does it matter at all to you? Does it matter that you are very dear to me, and I want you always? Will you be my wife, Anne? Will you?"

A sense of coming triumph filled David as he spoke. He was aware he

had not feared failure. During the last year Anne had so let herself be knitted with his life it seemed only a natural conclusion that he was as necessary to her as she to him. Besides, he had never failed in anything save his marriage, and without egotism he did not consider that this pale and lonely woman whose affection he had tested could disappoint him now.

But Anne drew away from him, and while his hand still held hers a wave of relief from the deeps of her soul went over her. She seemed suddenly set free from chains. David's manner, his gentle, tender words, had left her cold. He was clear-eyed, sensible, happy, but temperate and master of himself. She felt no desire to respond to his touch or glance. Instead there leaped into her mind a regret that, without quite realizing why, she must deny him.

"Anne," he said again, his face anxious now, "Anne, can you — can you love me? Will you marry me?"

She stood up and turned her head

away, still feeling strange to herself. When she spoke she obeyed a new knowledge, imperative, yet mystifying.

“David,” she said slowly, almost wonderingly, “I don’t love you that way.”

He remained silent until she forced herself to look fully at him.

“Ah,” he said, as if it were the first breath he had taken since she had replied, “is it so? I had hoped — but no matter now.”

Anne gazed shrinkingly at his serious, composed face and held out her hands. He took them and looked tenderly at her.

“We’ll forget this, Anne,” he said.

Her eyes looked frankly and sorrowfully into his.

“I go away to-morrow.” Her fingers held his closely. “Say good-by, and say it as if you forgave me.”

“For what? My dear Anne, you need no forgiveness from me.”

“I’ve given you some pain, David. I’ve disappointed you. I’m sorry.”

“You couldn’t help it,” he said. “You don’t love me. How are you to blame for that?”

Her mind grasped at the words eagerly. It was true. She could not help it. She was not to blame.

“Good-night, Anne. I hope your holiday will do you good, and I know it will,” David said, quite in his usual tone. “Don’t fail to let me know when you return.”

She let him go with another word, and went back to the fire. For a long time she crouched over the coals, her face sheltered by her hands. Nora’s entreaties about preparations for bed were unheeded.

“I want to be alone,” she said, pushing the girl away. “Come back by and by.”

She sat in the empty room, watching the fire sink lower. She was groping in the dark for an understanding of her own heart and the reasons which had made her refuse to be David Temple’s wife.

She had loved him the night he had sat in this same room and told her of Olga. She had continued to love him miserably, with passion, and had struggled to forget him through conflicts of regret. In the days when peace had come to her he had still seemed the most important and dearest in the world. She had many times thought of him so during the year spent in the same house with him.

Why, then, when he had spoken the words she had believed would hold the richest harmony in her life had they meant none of these dear things? Why had they not been acceptable?

Light came slowly, and she understood.

She had outlived her love for David Temple without having become aware of the change in herself. She had not even pitied him acutely, as women do pity what they must hurt.

Was he hurt very much? He had been very sure of her. With fine, convincing intuition she had felt the confi-

dence underlying his caressing words, had divined it in his calm eyes. He missed her, that was true enough; needed her, for the simplest and most sensible reasons. He was fond of her. She had his admiration, confidence, respect. From habit she had become necessary to him. His silent house required a mistress, his life a companion. But the love which comes to curse or bless a life, and which is all of life, was not there. Even the exaltation of the senses, miscalled love, which he had felt for Olga, was absent. There was no illusion, no pain, no romance, in David's affection for her. It was quiet, well-balanced, wholesome. She knew she was the passionless choice of his calm, wise moments. The thoughts came and went, and left her like a stone.

Nora tiptoed in, a muddy letter in her hand.

"The fool of a postman, to save cooling his feet, put this under the mat, instead of ringing the bell. It's a sorry-

looking letter it is now," and Nora dried it on her apron before putting it in Anne's outstretched hand.

It was from Donald. Her eyes brightened as she took it quickly and drew the rustling pages from the envelope. She read:

DEAREST ANNE: It's very quiet where I sit to-night writing to you. The short twilight has disappeared into a dark, blue night, the Southern Cross is in the sky, and the few other stars are bigger and brighter than the many at home. How far away you are from me! Somehow I never felt so alone in the wilderness as I do to-night. A longing to see you eats at my heart. There is no voice in the world as sweet as yours. I love your eyes, the way your lips look when you laugh. Oh, Anne, Anne, if I could see you now!

These fancies are wild, you will think maybe. Oh, but I do love you so! A nigger somewhere in the darkness outside is playing a passionate tune on a tin flute, and the savage notes go through me, racking me with a miserable sort of happiness, they are so like the ache I feel to see you, to touch you!

I've worked very faithfully. The men I'm thrown with, Armitage and Morgan, are bully good fellows and, like me, are hoping and toiling, with prosperity under another sky as the reward.

I like them both immensely, and I think they like me pretty well.

I wish you could see your two books. You'd hardly know them, they are so thumbed. I almost know them by heart. There's a bright future for you, Anne, dear. Oh, I hope you'll have all your dreams realized, every one! But there's bitterness in the thought for me. I see more and more how much I aspire to in loving you, how mad the dream that maybe — But I can't go on. Nothing can alter the fact that I do love you, and, though you go quite out of my life and marry and are happy without one thought of me, I must still love you. Nothing can alter that.

Oh, I wonder will you ever love me. Will I ever be able to go to you and ask you that? Will I dare? What you've been to me! Only to-day as I stood watching the negroes among the coffee shrubs I thought of the night in the mines when we sat with our hands clasped in the blackness and I talked to you of my wretched self as I'd never spoken to any living being, and the night when Joe died and I tried to tell you all that was in my heart. Do you remember it as I do? I kissed your hair that night. You didn't know it. Afterward, when you looked at me, your beautiful face so white, and whispered, "I'll remember, Donald," I thought my heart would burst with pain and joy. How I wish I could have my life to live over again and be at this moment the man God had meant me to be, not full of bitter memories,

still half afraid after fighting the habits of years ! If away back in the past when I was a little chap I could have known that one day I'd meet you, love you, need you so, how little all that was miserable would have seemed — only a time of darkness to be lived through somehow with happiness awaiting me at the end !

These are thoughts which haunt me all the time, though I've little enough time to think. There's so much to do I've grown very practical. But it's so quiet here to-night, and you are so very far away, and I do crave with physical pain for one sight of you, and the nigger's melody has fired my blood, and a queer bird outside my window utters now and then a soft good-night note as sad as death.

Oh, to have you beside me in this little room just for a moment, to bless it for all the days to come with the magic of your smile ! I love you dearly, Anne ; need you more.

I suppose you are very much at home again in your old rooms. I can fancy the year you spent in Waverly place was deadly dull, although you wouldn't say so. You say David has bought the old mansion from the doctor and regularly settled down there. I wonder why he does this unless he intends to remain a hermit or marry again.

Do you know I feel sorry for David ! Yet I don't think it would please him to think any one felt pity for him. I used to think in the dark days before you came to me it would be the

sweetest moment in my life to see him in some position where I could pity him. He used to antagonize and attract me in the one hour. But that's past and done with. There's not a tinge of envy in my feeling for him now. Since his wife's death he's written to me very seldom. Do you think he loved her very much? Does he make you his confidante now as he used to do? You and he were great chums once. I hated him then. And once — shall I tell you? — I thought that maybe he might love you and win you. If he had, I think I'd have gone mad with grief. David's had everything all his life, and had it before my longing eyes. But if you'd loved him, Anne, I would have suffered pangs too intolerable to think of without agony. I can lose you to another man and bear my disappointment as well as I can. But to David Temple — I can't bear to think of it. It would seem too wretchedly consistent with all that's gone before. But you're not going to marry him, so I'll stop tormenting myself this way.

How long will it be before I see you? I have succeeded moderately, have paid David his loan and made some money besides. One year more of this and I'll be able to go home. Home! One year! And then? Well, you know all I dream of. You are everything to me. You seem near to me some days. I wonder if your thoughts stray to me now and then and I feel them? Oh, do think of me, and as tenderly as you can! Do

you understand how I love you? Do you know what you are to me? I cannot write more. Good-night.

DONALD.

The letter slipped from Anne's fingers and lay a small, white patch against the whiter hem of her gown. She thrust her hands out invitingly. Her eyes had the look of a child's in the dark waiting for the coming of the light. The breath came and went unevenly through her parted lips. A happy smile broke over her face.

She picked the letter up and pressed it to her lips several times before she spoke to it, as if to one who listened:

"I know—I know all now! My dear, dear, dear!"

Chapter XXIV

A MAN on horseback appeared at the head of the road leading from one of the cup-shaped hills to the Fazenda Ricardo, in the province of Rio Janeiro. He wore a short white coat and nankeen trousers. A blue scarf, loosely knotted, showed a few inches of darkly tanned throat. A wide-leafed straw hat, evidently of Brazilian manufacture, was pulled over his eyes. Even in shadow the eyes were unmistakably Donald Sefain's.

He pulled in his horse and remained lost in a study of the scene, while the sunlight of a Brazilian January bathed him in an intense flood.

On every hand as far as the eye could see the land was prostrate under the stare of a pitiless sky. There was no shadow near him save that of his horse

and his own broad-hatted figure. Half way down the hill one bushy-headed palm and the prongs of some cacti lay patterned sharply on the bare and dazzling earth. Below, in the middle distance, he saw the fazenda, the ugly factory, the unsheltered square and cluster of outbuildings. Behind him lay the waving line of hills on which the coffee shrubs flourished, and from which the soft, monotonous chant and quavering of the negroes came to him.

This scene made his life — the fazenda, the coffee-bearing hills, the unsheltered road lying between them. Ugly, arid, lonely, were the words that rose in his mind as he paused there. The very truth and force of the artist in him made his heart rise in revolt. Hatred and longing were in his steady gaze.

In a few moments another rider came out of the plantation and drew up beside him. He was a big, fair-haired man, his light blue eyes a strange anomaly in his senna-brown face. When he spoke, his broad, musical accent con-

jured a vision of English fields on a spring morning instead of the hot, slothful land blazing around him.

“Waiting for me, Sefain?”

“No, I was thinking. I knew you’d follow.”

The Englishman looked at him, hesitated, and at length spoke:

“Sefain, you’re making a hard fight here, aren’t you?” He asked the question abruptly as they moved on at a crawling pace.

“Why?” and Donald’s uncommunicative soul, aroused to interest, looked for a moment speculatively from his brilliant eyes.

“Oh, I can see it! You hold your tongue better than any man I’ve ever met, and I’ve knocked about a bit in this contrary world. But I know you are simply sickening for a sight of home — and some woman.”

The words sent a dark flush up Donald’s cheek, and his silence was cold.

“Fact! But don’t suppose I’m trying to force your confidence, my boy.” He

laid his hand on Donald's wrist. "I speak this way because — well, because I'm deuced sorry for you" —

"You're wasting your pity, then. What the devil do you mean? One would think I'd been playing the part of a sentimental fool."

"Hold on, *mi amigo*. Let not the 'Inglezes' quarrel and set a bad example to these brown beggars here;" and an imperturbable smile distended Armitage's full cheeks. "I haven't finished. I'm sorry, and I'm envious at the same time. God! To be not yet thirty and in love! To know the world only in one pair of eyes and comprehend heaven in the touch of five slim fingers! What wouldn't I give to feel this, tell myself fondly I was a fool, and be glad I was! Hug your misery, my boy. Be such a fool. Some day, maybe, when you're like me and not a living thing is really necessary to you, when you know only the sleek and deadly level of practical self-content, you'll remember and wish the longings which tear you now

could come again and hurt you. That man only is blest whose happiness depends upon another human being."

Donald looked at him in amazement. He had never heard words like these from Armitage. They touched him, too. Over his lean brown face a dreaminess stole, and just as they crossed the fanlike shadow of the solitary palm upon the roadway he moved Armitage's hand from his wrist and gripped it.

"Armitage," he said, roused for the moment out of his self-reserve, "I almost wish, then, you could love a woman as miserably, as passionately, perhaps as hopelessly, as I do. She is the desire of my life and its greatest good."

"I knew it. The signs never fail. And now I want to talk to you. We might as well here as at the fazenda. Why don't you sell out to me or to Morgan, take what you've made, and go home?"

"Home?" echoed Donald, unable to

repress the note of hope and yearning in his voice at sound of that sweet word. "Why?"

"Do you think this" — with a contemptuous gesture toward the group of low, tiled-roof buildings and the bare land — "pays for the pain in the heart? As for the money you make, it's not much for the struggle. The days are gone when big fortunes were made in coffee-planting. It doesn't matter much whether my bones eventually lie under this sun or Korea's, and it's the same with Morgan. But you — well, there's a woman you love far away from this wilderness. For God's sake, seize your happiness, sell out, and go to her!"

"I won't," said Donald quietly. "I've a task to accomplish."

"Other than the averaging of a profit of eight shillings and tuppence on a bag of sixty kilograms?"

"Other than that. I am content with these medium profits. I came here not only to conquer or, at least,

disarm fortune, but to conquer myself. I'll stay the time I intended."

They rode on silently. An old negress with a child on her hip stopped in the middle of the road, her palm outstretched, and, following a curious custom, cried in Spanish:

"Bless me!"

"God bless you!" said Armitage, and she went on.

A cart drawn by goats and filled with firewood passed them. Black vultures as motionless as if fashioned in basalt looked down from the stump of a dead tree as they neared the fazenda.

On nearer view the details of the place were even more unlovely than the misty whole seen from the hilltop. Cattle grazed loose under the charge of an aged negro squatting in the sun and slumbering with his almost fleshless face against his knee. The gates through which the two men passed were, like everything else about the place, constructed to do what was required of them lazily, carelessly; and

having been swung back as if under protest when the horses were pushed against them, they returned only half way, with a screech from rusty hinges, and stuck fast in a tuft of weeds. A large family of cats, too attenuated to frolic, strolled languidly around the paved square or sat winking their half-blind eyes in the glare. From some of the white laborers' cottages came the smell of pork and frying bread. Over it all the sun flamed hard.

Donald and Armitage alighted at the factory, and from this came the low crooning, the murmur of mixed song, heard wherever the negro works.

"I'm dead for a siesta. My clothes seem weighted with stones," said Armitage, yawning. "I was up before the sun this morning, long before it, — so were you," he broke off suddenly, "and by George! you look dead beat. You'd better go a little easier. Do as I do, Sefain. After your coffee, lie down."

"I'm going to," said Donald listlessly.

“Yes, but sleep. Don’t lie and think. Why don’t you go now and let Tomas fetch your coffee at once? It’s almost three.”

“After I see Seraphine and find out what that rascal of an agent at the railway had to say in answer to my complaint. Must we keep trusting his honesty in weighing the sacks? I’d as soon trust the devil.”

“Ah, what can we do ? That’s the leakage through which our profits drip. But because time and exertion are as valuable as money in this enervating plague-spot, we must trust as we go, and be cheated from the moment we leave the sacks at the station to the moment they are shipped in Rio. Don’t let me think of it. The helplessness of it drives me frantic. It’s too hot to object even to being fleeced,” and Armitage swung across to Morgan’s house, where he knew pork and plantains were waiting for him.

Half an hour later, Donald, with hands in trousers’ pockets and hat tilted

lazily over eyes that seemed asleep, went down the stone square to the end farthest from the factory and paused before a small house exactly like the others save that it stood apart, a palm within a few feet throwing a top-heavy shadow across its white façade.

Home — that silent, shaded little house of four small rooms, where no familiar face ever welcomed him and no voice but his own or his servant's vibrated on the sleepy air. As Donald looked upon it now, the quiet place seemed to feel the dissatisfaction arising from his tormented heart, and to meet it with almost servile protest.

He had done what he could to make the house habitable. It was even a pretty house when compared with the bare hideousness with which Armitage and Morgan were content. The laced bamboo flaps on the windows made the place swim in gloom as restful after the sunlight as the feeling of a cool hand on the brow. There was matting on the floor, a hammock swung in a corner,

some sketches of his own upon the walls, some books on the mantel shelf. Chief among the books were Anne's, and just above them hung a small, unframed pastel he had made, showing her face with the expression he loved best, the eyes glancing sideways, half-questioning, tender.

He dropped the big manila hat to the floor, sank into a cane chair, and stretched his body out in a way expressive of unspeakable weariness. Now that his forehead was bared, the sun's strength was seen in the pallor of the skin just below the hair, making a division as sharp as a sabre cut.

Armitage was right: he was used up and needed a rest. His hand sought some cigars upon a small table and then slipped back. It would be better not to smoke until Tomas had brought his coffee — Tomas of the many lies, the sickly-sweet smile, and the coral-tipped pendants in objectionable ears.

All sorts of thoughts and half thoughts floated through his mind —

the heaviness of the day, the knavery of the Portuguese agent on the Dom Pedro II. Railroad, the wish to make money faster, the surprising words Armitage had spoken on the road, and always, no matter what his surface thought, the fierce and living consciousness of Anne underlying all, the ungovernable longings he had let speak in that last letter to her, the craving for her answer, the constantly recurring waves of homesickness checked by returning determinations to be strong to the end.

One more year of work, and he would have tested himself enough, and made enough money to go back to New York. He saw the town plainly, and with an unappeasable longing. There were the "Citizen" offices, the panorama of sparkling bay and clotted smoke against a copper sky seen from its western windows; the brisk crowds on Broadway, the snow, furs, and violets; but most of all Anne's rooms, the firelight clasping her as in a confidence, and perhaps

cold, sweet rain washing a winter plant upon the window-sill—cold, cold, sweet rain, not the sticky mist and windless showers falling at intervals in this hot season. He longed to feel its riot and chill against his face and hear the ring of the stone pavements under his tread, or to hurry through miles of frosty sunlight to Anne's side —

Tomas entered with the coffee and a dish of peppered chicken, but midway across the room he paused and let his melancholy eyes rest upon his master. He was asleep, his head fallen back, and exhaustion marking the features. Sleep was better for him than peppered chicken, Tomas reasoned, and remained considerably quiet, his gaze as melancholy, but more watchful, as he lifted a piece of the meat to his lips with his fingers and rhythmically licked their brown tips. It was indeed well for his master to slumber on, and if he took another piece there would still be enough.

Before he could materialize the

thought voices outside surprised him. He hurried to the door and met the Spanish housekeeper of Señor Morgan about to enter. At a little distance behind her he saw a small group of people, two strange women, evidently "Inglez," and with them Señor Armitage. At the entrance to the court stood an ox-cart in which the visitors must have come from the station. The heavy beasts were rubbing their noses together, moving the iron bells upon their collars, and sending a lonely clang through the sunlight.

"Mother of God, the señor will be surprised!" Morgan's housekeeper was saying in shrill tones, swaying from hip to hip in her excitement. "He will shout and throw his hat into the air for joy when he knows. Ah, you will all see! Ay, it is wonderful! Out of the way, stupid pig!" to Tomas. "I am to tell the señor that his love has come to him over thousands of miles."

"The señor sleeps as if the sun had touched him," interposed Tomas, with a

glance of murder, for he hated the housekeeper, who annoyed his reveries by talking too much, and knew so well how to take precise aim when she threw broken crockery at him. "I would not rouse him for the chicken even" —

"Because, beast, you wanted to eat it yourself! This is more important than food. Let me in!"

Armitage pulled her back and motioned Tomas aside.

"Go away, both of you!" he said, in a whisper of command.

He turned to one of the strangers. She was young, dark-eyed, a little too white and slender for his idea of beauty, and with marks of travel weariness on her face.

"Let your maid wait here. You will find Sefain in this house. They say he is sleeping."

Anne's lids sank for a moment over her eyes as if a throe of insupportable feeling coursed through her, which might have been apprehension or love, and she entered the dim room. She

stood with loosely clasped hands and looked down at Donald. Often during the travail of the long journey so impulsively undertaken, she had wondered what emotions would come to her in this moment when she faced the struggler who needed and loved her, the man she loved.

She looked at him in silence and her lips quivered. She was stirred with a passionate joy,—but not this alone,—an exquisite, penetrating pity, the desire to shield came from the depths of her nature, where the motherhood lurks that is part of every woman.

Donald's lids showing blue against the browned and sunken face, the clamminess upon the strip of pale forehead, the parched lips parted, the unguarded heart crying out its distress in the fixed expression of sorrow and appeal, were like so many chords around her heart drawing her toward him. She had done right to come to him.

She crossed the room to his side. But though she leaned above him, he

still slept, not knowing heaven was near. She sank on her knees and laid her cheek upon his drooping hand, as she called him clearly twice.

Donald started forward, dazed. The reality came in Anne's kiss as she clung to him.

THE END.

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